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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

An Examination of the Performative Nature of Rituals in the Theatrum Mundi

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*Award date:*  
2020

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An Examination of the Performative Nature of Rituals in the Theatrum Mundi

Stephen Whitehead

Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Philosophy  
University of Dundee

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## Acknowledgments

My thanks to Dr. Dominic Smith, without whose patience and advice as my principal supervisor this thesis would likely never have been completed. Thanks also to Prof. Mark Robson who supplied invaluable advice and feedback as my secondary supervisor, bringing to my attention just how much I have to learn about the field of Performance Studies.

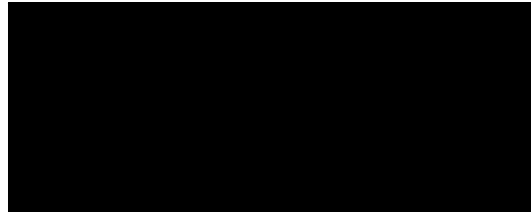
Many thanks also to my family, especially my parents, who provided unwavering support no matter how often my unrealistic prophecies of completion failed to come true. My Fiancée, Katlyn, provided invaluable assistance as a proof-reader as well as unwavering encouragement even during struggles with writers block and the hopelessness of imposter syndrome.

Finally, my heartfelt gratitude to the anonymous gentleman in Chicago who informed me that everything I had stated in my presentation was “completely wrong”, thus providing at times a powerful motivation to refine and improve my arguments.

Much of the content of this thesis was originally presented in a speculative format at various conferences over the last three years, including the 2015 and 2017 Performance Philosophy conferences, and the SEP-FEP conferences in 2015 and 2016.



I declare that I, Stephen Whitehead, am the author of this thesis, and that, unless otherwise stated, I have consulted all cited references. I declare that I have completed all the work of which this thesis is a record, and that it has not been previously accepted for a higher degree



## Summary

This thesis shall aim to contribute to the wider philosophical conversation a perspective on understanding the nature of rituals, many of which are rituals in an unspoken manner, which are carried out in a regular and commonplace context.

In the first division of this thesis, I begin by examining the various concepts and terminologies that will be used throughout. After beginning with an examination of the basic concepts of performance, play, and ritual, I then move on to the concept of the *theatrum mundi*, and what performances look like within such a context. I place the *theatrum mundi* within my own model of the *co-opticon*, within which everyone is simultaneously observer of and observed by everyone. Having done so, I next examine the elements of such a performance: space, action, and utterance, and their interaction. Attention is given here to the role of the performative utterance as they key factor of efficacy within rituals occurring in the *theatrum mundi*.

In the second division, I examine various examples of rituals which highlight the nature of performative rituals. These examples begin with studies of re-enactment broadly understood, beginning with historical re-enactment with focus on the American Civil War, followed by the nature of re-enactment within the US political system in the form of the Presidential debates. In the focus on the debates as re-enactments of the original Nixon vs Kennedy televised debate, I give special attention to the recent debates of the 2016 election between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton with focus on the *Her Opponent* recreation of sections of the debates with the genders of the participants reversed, performed on stage shortly after Trump's electoral victory. Re-enactment is closed off with a discussion of the role of re-enactment within academia. Following this I examine the concept of *performance as first philosophy*, in which I suggest that the manner in which philosophy, and arguments in general, is presented has an effect on the manner in which the argument is received and consequently factors on whether it is accepted or rejected independently of any actual truth value. In the final chapter I turn to the stage, discussing a proposed performance of two related plays and the didactic nature of such a performance.

## Introduction

Martin Puchner declares that “theatre and philosophy are intimately, if contentiously, related.”<sup>1</sup> In this thesis I will work within a broadened version of this claim implicitly found in other thinkers (most notably to this thesis within the wider context of Performance Philosophy) asserting that philosophy is intimately related not only to theatre but to performance as a whole. Within this investigation it should be noted that this intimate relation is one which is in part created by its separation: Puchner later noted that “the two are fundamentally different types of endeavours that appear comparable only by virtue of having been brought into the same institutional context within the modern university; by virtue, that is, of having been turned into departments.”<sup>2</sup> Puchner suggests then that the study of theatre and philosophy begins with the *and*: “It is the *and* that makes all the difference; it is the gap between theatre and philosophy that makes the study of their relation interesting, and even possible, in the first place.”<sup>3</sup> While the theatre may make use of philosophy and philosophy may make use of theatre, whilst the two may bleed together, they remain two distinct and different media. An understanding of this gap may be assisted by drawing clearly the distinction between theatre and the theatrical, drama, and performance. The theatrical relates to the theatre and draws from that tradition. Performance is a broader concept which will be discussed in great detail in Chapter One, whilst drama can be understood as that which relates to performance. Thus it is that both theatre and philosophy may be understood, through a shared engagement in performance, as being dramatic.

The dramatic in philosophy, of course, begins most obviously with Plato, and what Puchner calls “a most unusual form of philosophical drama”<sup>4</sup> – the Socratic dialogue in which Plato played out “richly conceived scenarios paying minute attention to setting, character, and plot even as they deviated from all known forms of drama, combining characters and ideas, actions and arguments in curiously meandering, labyrinthine

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Puchner, *The Drama of Ideas: Platonic Provocations in Theater and Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. vii.

<sup>2</sup> Martin Puchner, ‘Please Mind the Gap between Theatre and Philosophy’, *Modern Drama*, 56.4 (2013), 540–53 (p. 542).

<sup>3</sup> Puchner, ‘Please Mind the Gap between Theatre and Philosophy’, p. 543.

<sup>4</sup> Puchner, *The Drama of Ideas*, p. 4.

plots.”<sup>5</sup> The dialogue made some limited recurrence within philosophy, for example in Kierkegaard’s *Either/Or* albeit with less of a theatrical element.

The primary focus of this thesis will be *performativity*, a concept which refers directly not to performance theatrically understood but rather to a concept initially introduced as purely linguistic -a performative being a “speech act”: a word or phrase which causes a thing to occur – but which has since been expanded into “bodily acts” (notably in the works of Judith Butler, as is discussed in Chapter Two ¶5). The thesis will thus focus on both performance and performativity. These two are not the same thing: something may be a performance but not performative and vice versa. My interest is in those behaviours which are both performance and performative, which for our purposes shall be dubbed rituals. Ritual for the purposes of this thesis is the performative performance.

The thesis will be divided into two divisions, the first division being largely one of theory whilst the second shall be the practical implementation of this theory. More specifically, the theory of division one shall be centred on explaining the manner in which performance and performativity should be understood, whilst division two shall be a largely philosophical application.

Performance in this sense must be understood in a particular manner. Peter Brook notes that “I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage”<sup>6</sup>, and such an understanding of a stage will apply here. The performance which interests us occurs with the *Theatrum Mundi*, the world-as-stage, in which just as “a man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged”<sup>7</sup>, so can any space in the world be transformed temporarily into an intimate space of performance. This observation is not, however, that one-way observation of performer by audience but rather one in which all observe all in a *co-optical* manner. The explanation and expansion of these concepts will be the role of the first division. These two concepts being of great importance to the thesis as a whole, I will outline them in brief.

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<sup>5</sup> Puchner, *The Drama of Ideas*, p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> Peter Brook, *The Empty Space* (London: Penguin, 2008), p. 11.

<sup>7</sup> Brook, p. 11.

The *Theatrum Mundi* is, as previously stated, the concept of the world-as-stage. This may be found in a metaphysical sense throughout the history of philosophy, essentially presenting the world of humanity as taking place on a “stage” observed by some higher force such as God or the gods. Humans in this conception can be viewed as actors carrying out their roles, and whilst this does lend itself to an implication of determinism or fatalism (the actor, after all is generally acting out a script pre-written by the play’s “higher power”, that is the playwright), it is not necessarily required and indeed, for the concept of the *theatrum mundi* as I am using it, such a model is to be rejected. Rather the persons on the stage should be viewed not as actors but as performers in a wider sense. Further in the *theatrum mundi* discussed in this thesis, there is not a wider metaphysical view of the entire world as one singular performance, but rather one of many stages constantly created and uncreated, on which many short performances occur with an ever changing and rotating cast.

The *co-opticon* is a concept which I have developed to build on the work of Michel Foucault, who proposed in his *Discipline and Punish* a model of societal control based upon Jeremy Bentham’s *panopticon* prison design. In the prison, a central guard tower allows the prisoners to be constantly under threat of observation whilst being denied a knowledge of when such observation is occurring. In this model of the few watching the many, prisoners are theoretically scared into behaviour due to their inability to know when rule breaking will be seen and the fear of a swift and immediate punishment at any time. Foucault suggests that this model of control can be transferred to society as a whole, a practice which seems to be put in practice through the use of closed circuit television and other governmental observation methods. Thomas Mathiesen in *The Viewer Society* attempts to turn this model on its head through his suggestion that societal control involves a *synopticon*<sup>8</sup>: the many observing the few. In the *synopticon* television and other mass media puts the focus of the world on particular individuals, allowing them to be used as exemplars to shape societal views and behaviours. The *co-opticon*, meanwhile, is a model in which rather than the few watching the many, or the many watching the few, the many observe the many. Everyone is in a constant state of being both actor and spectator, both participating in and observing performances on the stage of the *theatrum mundi*.

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<sup>8</sup> Thomas Mathiesen, ‘The Viewer Society: Michel Foucault’s “Panopticon” Revisited’, *Theoretical Criminology: An International Journal*, 1.2 (1997), 215–32 (p. 215).

To this end my approach throughout this thesis, with the exception of *Chapter Five*, will be a largely descriptive one. In this sense, I mean that rather than attempting to offer a clear and fixed definition of concepts such as performance, a task which I suggest cannot be satisfactorily performed without the intentional exclusion of valid counterexamples, I assume the terms to be both too nebulous to clearly define whilst clearly understood on some communicative level that it is possible to point to a given example and uncontroversially say “this is a performance”. Resultantly, the first division will draw upon various thinkers to describe key aspects and facets found within performance, in order to provide a working meaning for the sake of this thesis wherein “performance” becomes shorthand for a particular subset of performances, using where appropriate applied examples to highlight these concepts. In the second division, the examples will take the foreground in order to show how these ideas exhibit themselves in practice whilst narrowing down in focus first from cultural activity, then to the academy, and finally into philosophy itself, through an analysis of the concept of *first philosophy*, that is to say that which is primal within the undertaking of philosophical activity.

## Outline

The first and second chapters constitute division one. Together, they aim to provide a theoretical framework. The third and fourth chapters comprise division two. Together, they aim to offer an application of the theory developed in division one. The fifth chapter provides an extended case study which draws together the threads of the previous four chapters into a potential future practical application. Additionally, each chapter will build upon the previous one, leading to the overall final conclusive argument. A rough synopsis of each of the chapters follows.

Chapter one, *Definitions*, begins as an attempt to define the varied terminology of the thesis. Very quickly it becomes apparent that such a task is, although not necessarily impossible, difficult. Rather than attempt to offer strict definitions, the initial sections become an attempt to set out the practical meaning for the purposes of the thesis of performance, play, ritual. This leads to an understanding that, for our purposes, *performance* is to be understood as, for the most part, referring to very specific forms of improvised ritual; and that these rituals should be understood as referring to all, or almost all, of our everyday human behaviours. Following this, I use Puchner’s essay as a starting point to attempt to explain the concept of the *theatrum mundi*, which will act

as a framing element within which our concept of performance may be understood. I will further place the *theatrum mundi* within my own concept of the *co-opticon*, as discussed above.

Chapter two is entitled *Space, Action, and the Performative Utterance*, and examines the three titular elements of ritual. Each of the elements is examined in detail with case studies demonstrating their importance and role, and then an analysis is made of how they fit together to form the essentials of ritual in the *theatrum mundi*.

In division two, comprised of chapters three, four and five, the theoretical is made practical first in a broad and then in a narrow application.

Chapter three, *Re-enactment*, begins this process by examining several real world scenarios, all of which are linked by the fact that they contain an element of ritual re-enacting. These scenarios are: the pastime of historical re-enactment, the performances of various American Presidential candidates' debates, and finally an introspective analysis of the re-enactments of academia. In this chapter it is proposed that re-enactment is one of the primary forms of ritual within the *theatrum mundi*.

Chapter four, *First Philosophy*, moves from academia as a whole to the specific subject of philosophy. In this chapter, I examine the concept of first philosophy as it has been understood by various major thinkers. This begins with Aristotle, for whom first philosophy was simply those basic principles from which all other philosophy is drawn. Aristotle's first philosophy was subsequently named the *Metaphysics* by a compiler, thus forming the branch of philosophy which still carries that name. Following Husserl, first philosophy takes on a new meaning going from another name given to metaphysics, to a title granted to those things which are primal in philosophy. That is, to some extent they are still the "first things" which Aristotle sought, but those first things are not necessarily metaphysics. Descartes, meanwhile, in his *Meditations in First Philosophy* offers a new primality: that of epistemology. Rather than beginning with the metaphysical principles, Descartes chooses to doubt them and to rebuild only after establishing his ability to know and to trust his own judgment. Finally, Levinas offers a fourth view of first philosophy: he argues that first philosophy is ethics, an important movement of first philosophy from a purely theoretical position to a practical one, providing justification to the use in this thesis of a practical first philosophy.

Having examined and established what is meant by first philosophy, I make the argument that performance is first philosophy. This represents a logical rethinking of how philosophy is to be understood, by continuing to a further step along a pathway created by each of the previous re-thinkings that has been discussed. I then examine, through various examples and case studies, what exactly it means for performance to be first philosophy and propose some practical manners in which this understanding may potentially be used.

The final chapter of the thesis is a culmination of the previous chapters in the form of a case study, of a theatrical variety. I examine two related plays, *No Exit* by Jean-Paul Sartre and *The Upstairs Room* by David K. O'Hara, in order to propose a theoretical joined performance of the two which will act to apply the concepts directly. In doing so I will take a brief foray through the work of Gilles Deleuze and conclude with a justification as to how this performance fits into the central thesis.

### **Methodology**

The methodology I will be using, as much as I may be said to have a definable methodology, is a phenomenological approach. Given that the approach taken is one grounded in phenomenology we must be aware of an inherent danger of subjectivity. As I note in chapter one something as basic and overlooked as one's language may radically affect the phenomenological understanding in one's analysis. I would invite the reader therefore to judge this work not in terms of the success or failure of a particular method in its application but rather in a therapeutic ethic. In other words its value in revealing, however temporarily, a perspective that allows for the possibility of action. As shall be discussed later in this introduction, within the context of *Performance Philosophy*, this approach should be understood within particular frames of context. Primarily I will lean upon the Heideggerian tradition in my understanding of phenomenology, with Heidegger's texts appealed to throughout.

### **Sources**

In the first division, I draw great inspiration from the work of Richard Schechner. Largely for his understanding and explanation of certain ideas such as performance, play and ritual, but also in order to use some of his work as case studies and springboards for illustration purposes. The choice of Schechner as a focus was in many ways an obvious one as, being one of the founders of the field of performance studies,



Schechner's influence is far-reaching and was referenced again and again in works read during the research phase of this thesis. Further to this, the approach taken in Schechner's work on performance, that of an anthropologist's perspective, is in-line with my own approach.

In order to ground Schechner fully within a framework of philosophy rather than anthropology, I have also drawn upon overtly philosophical thinkers during the definition of terms found in chapter one: on the subject of ritual Schechner is seen alongside Rene Girard, whilst on play Miguel Sicart is turned to for an enlightening perspective. In Chapter Two Jon Foley Sherman's writings on stage presence and attention play an important role. Meanwhile Martin Puchner's writing on the *theatrum mundi* carries great importance, sitting alongside Schechner as a central writer for our understanding of performance.

If Schechner and Puchner are central to the performance side of the thesis, central to the philosophical is Martin Heidegger. Although Heidegger is not referenced directly until the fourth chapter, and in that instance the discussion is limited to a single concept found in the first division of *Being and Time*, his spectre can be found in various places since the general approach taken can be said to be influenced by his own approach to philosophy. Many of the thinkers I examine are from the phenomenological or post-phenomenological traditions and so were either influenced by or reacting to his work, and finally, whilst his appearance is not until relatively close to the end, it is then in relation to a crucial argument to which the previous three chapters may be viewed as having been built towards. Gilles Deleuze, meanwhile, whilst making a short and late appearance, offers an overt and valuable bridge between performance and philosophy.

Whilst various other thinkers have been drawn upon, particular attention should be drawn to one specific group: in several chapters I have drawn from works related to the *Performance Philosophy* research network, which describes itself as "an international network open to all researchers concerned with the relationship between performance & philosophy", and which is responsible for various publications including a book series and a journal. From *Encounters in Performance Philosophy*, one of the edited books in Palgrave MacMillan's *Performance Philosophy* series, I draw on essays by Martin Puchner and Denis Guénoun in the first division, whilst in chapter four I reference Tawny Anderson's paper from issue 2 of the *Performance Philosophy* journal.

## On Performance Philosophy

To conclude this introduction, I would like to spend a short time considering the field of *Performance Philosophy*, to which this thesis has been stated to contribute, and the place of such a contribution. The focus of this thesis was originally intended to be a treatise on improvisation and non-representational performances prior to a rethinking following my attendance of the 2015 *Performance Philosophy* conference in Chicago. It was at that time that a focus on the philosophy of performance became far less interesting than the relationships between philosophy *and* performance – a distinction which moves quickly towards Puchner’s aforementioned focus on the gap between philosophy and theatre.

In discussing the field I shall draw largely on the series preface of the *Performance Philosophy* book series, as a pragmatic choice acknowledging the need to choose some grounding whilst also recognising the intentionally broad and, some might say, under-defined nature of the field.

*[B]oth the field and this series specifically bring together all those scholars for whom the question of the relationship between performance and philosophy and, therefore, the nature of both performance and philosophy (including their definitions, but also their ‘ontology’ or ‘essential conditions’), are of primary concern. However, in order to maintain its experimental and radical nature, Performance Philosophy must also be open to including those scholars who may challenge extant concepts of ‘performance’ and ‘philosophy’. In this sense, ‘What is Performance Philosophy?’ could be considered one of the field’s unifying (or at least, shared) questions, just as the question ‘What is Philosophy?’ has been a shared question for philosophers for centuries.<sup>9</sup>*

That the question of “What is Performance Philosophy?” as a unifying question of the field (indeed it was the title of the first *Performance Philosophy* conference, held in 2013) is an important point as it implies a lack of a definitive definition or agreement. This is a theme that will be echoed throughout this thesis when examining definitions of

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<sup>9</sup> Laura Cull, Alice Lagaay, and Freddie Rokem, ‘Series Preface’, in *Encounters in Performance Philosophy: Theatre, Performativity and the Practice of Theory*, ed. by Laura Cull and Alice Lagaay (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp. viii–x (pp. viii–ix).

subjects related to performance. Such an apparent lack of agreement should of course be seen not as a fault, but as a strength because, as is noted, the central question of “what is philosophy” has been similarly a unifying question, even if unspoken, for philosophers in general and it is the existence of such a source of unity that allows for a field to be identified as something other than a loosely connected series of largely unrelated thinkers. The preface proceeds to offer a “four-fold” argument for the “timeliness” of the field as follows:

*In the first instance, it coincides with a (self) re-evaluation of Performance Studies as having long since come of age as a discipline. Second, it takes place in the context of the increasing importance of the notion of ‘practice as research’ in the arts. Third, it reflects an increased engagement with Philosophy across performing arts scholarship. Finally, it is emerging simultaneously with an intensification of the questioning of what counts as Philosophy and what form philosophical thinking might take – for instance, in the context of new work emerging from object-oriented ontology (Harman, Brassier et al.) and non-philosophy (Laruelle, Mullarkey et al.). Specifically, philosophy is becoming increasingly interested in its own performance and performativity, and in looking to the arts as a source of models for itself as it moves away from traditional metaphysics.<sup>10</sup>*

How does this thesis relate to these threads? The field of Performance Studies and its self-evaluation, whilst treated as a serious source of ideas is not the primary context of this thesis, which rather is first and foremost a work in the field of Philosophy. Neither has “Practice as research” been a serious thread in terms of this thesis (although, as will be discussed in the general conclusion, opportunities for such practice are created), with the majority of the work being purely based in theory. The third thread is irrelevant as this thesis does not sit within the field of “performance arts scholarship”. The fourth track, then, is the one of immediate interest, especially as regards to the claim of philosophy “becoming increasingly interested in its own performance and performativity”: It is specifically this that is under discussion, and the model of *performance as first philosophy* should thus be viewed as one more approach to the question of philosophy’s performance. As far as a “move from traditional metaphysics”

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<sup>10</sup> Cull, Lagaay, and Rokem, p. ix.

is concerned, this thesis can be said to stay firmly in the boundaries of metaphysics or ontology in the Heideggerian tradition, concentrating as it does on a phenomenological approach to performance. However it is my assertion that such an approach is necessitated at this stage by the nature of performance: performance being a thing which we do and should thus be examined from the perspective of what exactly it means for us to perform.

The choice of a phenomenological approach is worthy of consideration within the context of the field. Stuart Grant notes that in relation to theatre and performance studies “there appears to be an increasing indeterminacy and uncertainty as to what is invoked, implied, and asserted, when somebody uses the term phenomenology, and consequently, very little systematic, rigorous application of the method to phenomena of theatre and performance.”<sup>11</sup> In attempting to pin down exactly how phenomenology should be understood he explains that “the point of phenomenology is to examine specific instances of phenomena, perceptions, and inner intuitions, with the primary aim to explore how they have their roots in essences”<sup>12</sup> wherein “essence” is understood to mean:

*[A] fundamental condition of being in the world. We carry essences with us and operate them at all times, bringing them to all situations. We know a house is a house because we bring the essence “house” to it. We build a house only because we already possess the essence, “house”. We know something about chairs which enables us to recognize something as a chair and not a table, and we can differentiate a stool from a chair... Yet if we begin to approach essences, we find that they are unclear, taken-for-granted categories.<sup>13</sup>*

In Grant’s view, this concentration on essence is essential to phenomenology. It is of course worthy of considering that even if this is the case, it is certainly not unique: the question of “essences” is of course found in Aristotle, who may be seen as developing from the base of a concept inherited from Plato. Understood thus, phenomenology takes for granted the Aristotelian metaphysic of essence such that an analysis of phenomena is able to take for granted the existence of some primal and objective stuff from which an understanding of the phenomena may arise. Grant continues:

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<sup>11</sup> Stuart Grant, ‘The Essential Question: So What’s Phenomenological about Performance Phenomenology? [Unpublished Paper]’, p. 1.

<sup>12</sup> Grant, p. 2.

<sup>13</sup> Grant, p. 4.

*A phenomenological investigation seeks the way in which the object of study gives itself, taking the terms of the study from the object itself. No phenomenologist would be naïve enough to assume that they were capable of an objective, presuppositionless approach to a phenomenon, but the primary impulse of the phenomenological approach, the dominant methodological tenet, is to suspend prejudice and presupposition, as far as is possible, while still remaining coherent and intelligible.*<sup>14</sup>

Following this viewpoint it would seem that the correct approach is to concentrate on the essence of performativity, in other words to study it as closely as possible to the manner in which it presents itself, whilst attempting to avoid the imposition of a pre-supposed viewpoint. In drawing upon the commentaries on the performative made by other thinkers then it will be necessary to consider implicitly whether they talk about performativity as it is, or whether an abstraction is being made in order to talk about a theoretical performativity. At the same time, it must be considered that the manner in which performativity presents itself to a given individual may not be universal – that whilst it has an essence, that essence is unclear and difficult to pin down. This investigation therefore may be said to be one focused on an essential performativity in one or some, but not necessarily all, of its presentations as far as such an investigation may be done without claiming to be an unobtainable “true” objectivity.

After such a phenomenological groundwork has been considered it is then possible to move into the practical-theoretical realm of Chapter Five, and from there towards the possibility of a more practice-led research, as well as a wider realm of theory-led research which moves outward from the phenomenological grounding.

A further point must be raised: there is a tension to be found in the methodology used in this thesis and approaches that have been raised within the context of Performance Philosophy. Cull suggests that there is a problematic “tendency...merely to apply philosophy to performance”<sup>15</sup> and that it is necessary for philosophy to be “willing to encounter performance as thinking, and as that which might extend what philosophy counts as thinking”.<sup>16</sup> Wade Hollinghaus and Will Daddario, likewise, talk of “a new paradigm, one that no longer *applies* philosophical ideas”<sup>17</sup> as well as highlighting an

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<sup>14</sup> Grant, p. 6 Emphasis original.

<sup>15</sup> Laura Cull, ‘Performance as Philosophy: Responding to the Problem of “Application”’, *Theatre Research International*, 37.01 (2012), 20–27 (p. 21) <<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0307883311000733>>.

<sup>16</sup> Cull, ‘Performance as Philosophy’, p. 21.

<sup>17</sup> Wade Hollinghaus and Will Daddario, ‘Performance Philosophy: Arrived Just in Time?’, *Theatre Topics*, 25.1 (2015), 51–56 (p. 52) <<https://doi.org/10.1353/tt.2015.0002>>.

important debate within the field, representing a disagreement on methodology between Cull and Puchner:

*The Puchner/Cull argument indicates a difference of opinion regarding the potential disciplinary trajectory for performance philosophy. One way of framing that argument would be through the issue of use or application. Puchner's approach to performance philosophy, to "mind the gap" between the two disciplines, results in, among other things, an encouragement for scholars to use philosophy to interpret sites of performance. Cull, on the other hand, opts for a performance philosophy in which philosophy is not used or applied, but rather recognized as inseparable from performance, asserting that to perform is to philosophize.<sup>18</sup>*

In Cull's explanation of this issue, "application implies the subordination of the powers of one practice or process to the needs and goals of another, the instrumentalization of the example for the purposes of an argument which has little interest in the example itself beyond its value for that argument"<sup>19</sup> leading to performance studies taking on a "parasitic nature [in which] we often look to philosophy for the next new method...with which to analyse performance"<sup>20</sup>. Whilst likewise "philosophers...are arguably not averse to being parasitic on the arts"<sup>21</sup>, choosing examples from film and literature purely for their ability to highlight a particular concept rather than for their holistic value.

My own methodology might be accused of this same parasitic behaviour: is it not the case that those specific examples of performances used throughout this thesis are selected for their having attributes which highlight the theories put forth? This criticism, if it is a criticism, is not groundless as in some cases it rings true: in particular, those examples which are taken from the works of other theorists, themselves selecting examples for their application, would seem to do exactly that. Further the fact that Puchner is the earliest cited author in this work might be seen to unconsciously set a firm grounding towards his side of the argument. Whilst these points do not lack merit, I would argue that they are not the full story: due to the phenomenological approach taken, many of the example performances (in particular those found in chapter 3-4) preceded the use of theory, with the ideas expressed drawing from a questioning as to how those rituals presented themselves. Indeed whilst the thesis is structured logically

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<sup>18</sup> Hollingshaus and Daddario, p. 54.

<sup>19</sup> Cull, 'Performance as Philosophy', p. 21.

<sup>20</sup> Cull, 'Performance as Philosophy', p. 22.

<sup>21</sup> Cull, 'Performance as Philosophy', p. 22.

in order to present theory and then demonstrate its application, the subjects under application were initially explored prior to the laying out of the theory. It may be countered, however, that despite this the structure of the thesis is still one of application.

Furthermore the reliance on a phenomenological paradigm may be seen as a wider application in itself: am I not, after all, choosing to apply a phenomenological model to the wider discussion? These are not easy questions with a clear solution. Certainly it may simply be the case that there is a need to accept that the target audience for this thesis is those scholars interested in performance phenomenology. Alternatively, it might be suggested that a level of application is necessary at this current stage in my research: that chapter five in particular offers the beginnings of a move towards a focus upon allowing a particular choreographed performance to engage in philosophy as itself. In such a reading it may be said that before application may be abandoned entirely, an element of application is required – the proverbial ladder to be kicked away as suggested by early Wittgenstein.

Division I



## Chapter One

In this chapter I will begin to develop the foundations of the thesis. Key concepts will be introduced and defined, specifically related to performance. The concept of ritual, which shall be the primary form of performance that is the focus of this thesis, will be introduced. This will lead into chapter 2's discussion of the elements that make up the ritual performance that is our focus.

In §1 I will examine several major terms which will be used throughout the work: first and most obviously, *performance* (§1), and then the concepts of *play* (§2) and *ritual* (§3). Although they may seem on the surface to be unrelated, these concepts will be shown to be engaged in an *interplay* (§4) crucial to my overall argument in this chapter. Following this, in §2 I will then define and examine one specific term: the concept of the *theatrum mundi*, or world theatre, which will be central to performance as it is understood in the thesis. After defining the *theatrum mundi* (§5) I will explore the manner in which it is manifest, and what it means for *performance* as understood from §2 to occur within such a framework (§6), before placing it into a larger context dubbed the *co-opticon* (§7) through which the world may be understood as engaged in a process of all observing and being observed by all.

### §1 Definitions

#### ¶1. *Performance*

The definition of performance is central to this thesis. Unfortunately, it is not a simple term to pin down – although most people will instinctively claim to be able to identify a performance, and the word itself is in common use throughout everyday life, it will not necessarily be the case that everyone will be able to give similar definitions, let alone academically rigorous ones. In fact, within the growing field of “performance philosophy” (to which this thesis hopes to add a useful contribution), the definition is largely left to the individual researcher with convenors Laura Cull and Alice Lagaay noting that:

*When working to establish a name for this increasingly vibrant field of activity, the term ‘performance’ was chosen deliberately for its openness, its indeterminate definition. That is, in this context, performance is understood as a broader term than theatre, rather than*

*the reverse, and hence the term Performance Philosophy incorporates music, dance and performance on screens, as well as the other kinds of social performance included in Richard Schechner's broad-spectrum definition.*<sup>22</sup>

What then is a performance, for our purposes? The dictionary offers us various possibilities, all unsatisfactory:

*The accomplishment or carrying out of something commanded or undertaken; the doing of an action or operation.; [...]The quality of execution of such an action, operation, or process; the competence or effectiveness of a person or thing in performing an action; [...] an action, act, deed, or operation; [...]The action of performing a play, piece of music, ceremony, etc.*<sup>23</sup>

This “indeterminate definition” must be approached head-on: it seems obvious when using the word performance that we innately know the meaning that we ascribe to it: we do not need to clarify that there is a difference between the performance of an actor on stage being reviewed in the arts pages of the local newspaper, and the performance of an office worker being reviewed by management at a performance review. In narrowing down our meaning we may at least begin by approaching the aforementioned Richard Schechner: in his system he allows for “performances in everyday life – greetings, displays of emotion, family scenes, professional roles, and so on”<sup>24</sup> and in doing so implies that performance in this sense carries an element of what we might call an observed carrying out of actions – thus we may remove those definitions from play (so to speak) which revolve around a measured level of competence or effectiveness, and so on. Our definition of performance then will require the carrying out of actions or behaviour. We will allow for the carrying out of a particular job function as a performance as it can be seen as “playing a role” within a particular context. Questions may also arise as to the exact nature of performance in terms of requirements on

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<sup>22</sup> Laura Cull and Alice Lagaay, ‘Introduction’, in *Encounters in Performance Philosophy: Theatre, Performativity and the Practice of Theory*, ed. by Laura Cull and Alice Lagaay (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp. 3–12 (p. 4).

<sup>23</sup> ‘Performance, N.’, *OED Online* (Oxford University Press) <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/140783>> [accessed 4 July 2015].

<sup>24</sup> Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies: An Introduction* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2002), p. xvii.

physicality, the existence or lack thereof of an audience, limitations upon the performance and so on. These are complicated issues, and we must beware the risk of attempting to address each definitively and thus creating a definition so rigid as to deny the right of certain performances to call themselves such due to failing to tick the correct boxes. Indeed Schechner would encourage our taking a much broader approach: after suggesting that “performances... are made of ‘twice behaved behaviours,’ ‘restored behaviours,’ performed actions that people train to do, that they practice and rehearse”<sup>25</sup> he then proclaims that “every action, no matter how small or encompassing, consists of twice-behaved behaviours.”<sup>26</sup> In this case it might be said that every action is a performance, but in such a case it will also be seen that such a definition may be of limited use for academic purposes. The tricky nature of defining performance thus leaves us positioned to ask whether perhaps we should approach the matter from a new angle? Rather than ask, “what is performance” we may perhaps find a more interesting approach develops when we instead ask, “where is performance”, “how is performance”, or indeed “why is performance”?

The question of why anything is a dangerous one: the risk exists that it might become a black hole from which we may be unable to escape, and so displace this entire thesis. Although such an investigation may well be fruitful it is one which we must, for now, pass over in silence as one which is out with the scope of these pages. Rather than ask why we perform, it will be enough for the present to accept that we do so, and to focus on what that means for our experience of the world. As for the other questions, the question “where is performance” is one that will play an important role in Chapter Two, when we will look at the role of space in performance, looking in particular at Martin Puchner’s analysis of site-specific performance and analogies drawn therein to “site-centred philosophy”, drawing from the works of Heidegger. The question of “where” will also crucially focus on the concept of the *theatrum mundi*, discussed in §2 of this chapter. This concept will allow us to justify the concept of all behaviour being to some extent ritual, performed on a stage with an audience of all, or even with the performer themselves as the sole spectator (a concept that will be discussed in relation to Boal’s idea of the spect-actor in ¶7). It will be seen that the underlying response to “where is performance” will be “everywhere”, or at least everywhere that human behaviour is actively occurring. A possible objection arises: if performance is

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<sup>25</sup> Schechner, *Performance Studies*, p. 22.

<sup>26</sup> Schechner, *Performance Studies*, p. 23.

everywhere does this not result in the same uselessness as the claim that that “what” of performance is in essence everything so far as human behaviour is concerned? Perhaps it may seem like that, but as will be observed in the aforementioned upcoming chapters the “where” is far more open to analysis and to a valuable unpacking. The question of “how” is of great importance and will be examined in the rest of this definition: more specifically, “how is performance manifest?” The answer, it will be seen, is that performance is manifest through ritual, through play, through improvisation.

## ¶2. Play

The subject of play will have an important role in this thesis, but what do we mean by it? Initial obvious impressions may seem on the surface unrelated: we may think of playing a game. The less charitable may be tempted to associate play with an element of frivolity or a lack of maturity – children playing in the street or at the park. The writing of this section could be seen as a type of play: aware of the sheer impossibility of defining the term I search for ways to describe it that will allow me to put off the inevitable. Is this endeavour doomed to fail? Schechner in his usual understated manner notes that “play is very hard to pin down or define”<sup>27</sup>, whilst Miguel Sicart states, with apparent pessimism, that he will “foolishly attempt to define what play is”<sup>28</sup> with the expectation that the attempt “will fail”<sup>29</sup>.

As with our attempt to define performance, an attempt to define play may simply require that we work in abstracts – we may discuss play in terms of the idea or the manner in which it manifests whilst it may still be found that we cannot give a hard and fast definition. As a basis, we will take Sicart’s assertion that “to play is to be in the world. Playing is a form of understanding what surrounds us and who we are, and a way of engaging with others. Playing is a mode of being human.”<sup>30</sup> This can be seen to echo Frederick Schiller’s claim that “to speak out once for all, man only plays when in the full meaning of the word he is a man, and he is only completely a man when he plays.”<sup>31</sup> To Schiller, play is a “twofold experience in which [the individual] would have the consciousness of his freedom and the feeling of his existence together, in

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<sup>27</sup> Schechner, *Performance Studies*, p. 79.

<sup>28</sup> Miguel Sicart, *Play Matters, Playful Thinking* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2014), p. 6.

<sup>29</sup> Sicart, p. 6.

<sup>30</sup> Sicart, p. 1.

<sup>31</sup> Frederick Schiller, ‘Letters on the Aesthetical Education of Man’, in *The Aesthetical Essays* (Project Gutenberg, 2006) <<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/6798/>> [accessed 22 August 2018].

which he would simultaneously feel as matter and know himself as spirit”<sup>32</sup> and so carries a sense that it is the key to uniting a dualistic nature. In this sense then it is, as in Sicart’s view, a form of understanding ... albeit in more strong terms it would seem to be the only *authentic* form of understanding made available.

Particular attention should be given to this idea of play as “a mode of being human” – might we suggest that play can be seen as an existential state? What sort of state might it be? There is certainly an element of a lack of seriousness (a thing which can be contrasted to playfulness) or perhaps of fun, and the relation to games which was previously mentioned. A crucial factor, I suggest, is that there is a suggestion of room for experimentation, for attempting new ideas within the safety of “just a game”. Play as an existential state may also tie into what Schechner calls “dark play” – a form of play in which some participants do not know they are engaged in play, and which “may be entirely private, known to the player alone [o]r it can erupt suddenly, a bit of microplay, seizing the player(s) and then quickly subsiding”<sup>33</sup>. To Schechner, dark play carries with it some level of risk, or danger, alongside the element of deception. Schechner’s dark play is linked intrinsically to a third form of play, deep play, developed by Jeremy Bentham and defined as “the kind of play in which the risks to the player outweigh the potential rewards.”<sup>34</sup> Schechner notes that Clifford Geertz in his *The Interpretation of Cultures* suggests that these risks are taken not because the participant is irrational (as suggested by Bentham’s utilitarianism) but rather because “deep playing draws the whole person into what amounts to a life-and-death struggle expressing not only individual commitment...but cultural values”<sup>35</sup>. In my own formulation I will not be defining dark play as necessarily linked to deep play in the manner which Schechner suggests: as will be discussed in ¶4, whilst an element of risk which expresses cultural values, individual commitment, or other similar things may be involved. However, it is my suggestion that “playing in the dark” need not de facto involve risk. It is surely possible to imagine such scenarios in which there is no real risk occurring to any of the participants, whether or not they are aware that they are involved in a game of some sort. Further, I will depart from Schechner in the following essential manner: in Schechner’s dark play it is imagined that the participants may be divided into two

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<sup>32</sup> Schiller, ‘Letters on the Aesthetical Education of Man’.

<sup>33</sup> Schechner, *Performance Studies*, p. 107.

<sup>34</sup> Schechner, *Performance Studies*, p. 82.

<sup>35</sup> Richard Schechner and Sara Brady, *Performance Studies: An Introduction*, 3rd ed (London ; New York: Routledge, 2013), pp. 218–19.

categories: the players and those that do not know that they are involved in play. I would suggest that it is possible during the game for these roles to take on a very fluid form, such that a participant may move from player to unaware and back, or vice versa, and further that it is possible for a participant to be both at once: playing whilst unaware that they are not still taking the entire thing completely seriously.

Bringing back the element of improvisation which play allows, we may begin to suggest that improvisation brings in an opportunity to take risks, whilst justifying it within the state of play and experimentation.

### ¶3. *Ritual*

Ritual is a term often thought of in a religious sense. We may refer to rituals specifically, such as the ritual of the mass, or the Passover rituals; likewise we may refer to rituals in the abstract: so-called pagan rituals, the performance of a ritual prayer, ritual sacrifice. We might also associate them with groups which, whilst not conventionally “religious”, are associated with a sense of mystery or mysticism, for example the rituals used by the Freemasons to impart teachings to members. We may even see the use of ritual in a more informal manner referring to entirely secular occurrences: one might speak of their morning ritual, for instance. Like play, we may find it difficult to offer a definition of ritual which will satisfy everybody. Unlike play, we can see that most rituals have certain commonalities which can be pointed at in order to say “that is a ritual”. For the purposes of this thesis we will be taking these factors in a very specific direction: one which moves away from the religious sense of ritual (for instance whilst Girard’s analysis of ritual as the recreation of a past act of violence<sup>36</sup> is a fascinating and useful one in the anthropology of religion, it will be of little use to our wider purpose in these pages) and takes ritual in its widest possible meaning.

There is another factor of ritual, which we will return to in more detail in Chapter Three, to be considered: that of re-enactment. This may be seen illustrated for instance in Rene Girard’s claim that ritual is *mimetic*, a term which here means that “ritual is the imitation and re-enactment of spontaneous, unanimous violence”<sup>37</sup> related to a past source of crisis in the community which was resolved through the violent death of a scapegoat figure – an individual within the community to whom responsibility was

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<sup>36</sup> See René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, John Hopkins paperbacks ed., [Nachdr.] (Baltimore: Hopkins Univ. Press, 1979).

<sup>37</sup> Girard, p. 99.

assigned. It is possible that this element of sacrifice requires a definition of ritual more limiting than the one that I am offering here – Girard’s rituals are not merely mere re-enactments, but rather re-enactments specifically of violence. My understanding of ritual does not require violence as a necessary component. Whilst for the present chapter Girard’s thoughts may be put aside, when they are later returned to emphasis will be put upon the element of re-enacting, whilst the scope of that which is re-enacted may be broadened.

Rituals may be said to feature the following factors: they are a performance, they point to some meaning beyond themselves, they are generally choreographed, and their validity is in part dependent upon their being conducted by the correct person (an ordained priest, say). The issue of authority is one which we may need to abandon: does one’s “morning ritual” have a set authority conducting it? Certainly not in any formal manner. The other factors, thankfully, are less controversial: we may comfortably describe ritual as a choreographed set of actions. The astute reader will notice an immediate potential snare: previously we noted Schechner’s definition of ritual as action twice-behaved. What is a choreographed set of actions, if not behaviour twice-behaved? In other words the first factor of ritual is, at its heart, merely that it is a performance. The second factor of ritual is that it points to a meaning beyond itself, but is this not simply the definition of a sign? And if we take ritual to simply be a performance which acts as a sign then we must ask whether limits can be put upon what this sign might entail? This is hard to say.

A further common observation in rituals is that they contain an element of *liminality*, a word taken from the Greek for “threshold” which can be said to signify ambiguity. In attempting to describe the “necessarily ambiguous”<sup>38</sup> nature of liminality, Victor Turner notes that it “is frequently likened to death, to being in the womb, to invisibility, to darkness, to bisexuality, to the wilderness, and to an eclipse of the sun or moon.”<sup>39</sup> This period of ambiguity is illustrated in the discussion of rites of passage, which are stated to consist of three phases: “separation, margin (or limen), and aggregation”<sup>40</sup>. In such rituals the liminal period serves to act as the gap between the participant being removed

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<sup>38</sup> Victor W. Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, The Lewis Henry Morgan Lectures, 1966 (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1969), p. 95.

<sup>39</sup> Turner, p. 95.

<sup>40</sup> Turner, p. 94.

from their original position and their initiation into their new position. That the liminal is ambiguous both by definition and in its points of comparisons (the points of comparison noted by Turner are, after all, not ones to in which can easily see distinct shared characteristics) speaks to the core essence of ritual. Ritual asserts or remarks upon identity, but it does so in a manner that is beyond words. It is an experiential assertion. Erving Goffman seems to capture this element of ambiguity in a wider context, albeit not specifically referred to by that name. Goffman uses the example of the contrast between medical and surgical nursing staff observed in a study, wherein the surgical staff were observed by patients to be constantly engaged in “useful” work, whilst the medical staff were often believed to be wasting time due to the less “obvious” nature of their activities. He suggests that “if the individual’s activity is to become significant to others, he must mobilize his activity so that it will express *during the interaction* what he wishes to convey.”<sup>41</sup> In this so-called “dramatic realisation”, it is the most visible actions of an activity which carry meaning: the “baseball umpire...must forgo the moment of thought which might make him sure of his judgment; he must give an instantaneous decision so that the audience will be sure that he is sure of his judgment”<sup>42</sup> whilst “undertakers must...charge a great deal for their highly visible product – a coffin that has been transformed into a casket – because many of the other costs of conducting a funeral are ones that cannot be readily dramatized.”<sup>43</sup> The Umpire it seems is carrying out a ritual of forgoing surety of judgment in order to cement his identity as a sure judge. The undertaker’s visible rituals regarding the coffin are those which identify them to the customer and the funeral-goers as undertakers. Liminality can, I propose, be found in those moments of dramatization: the viewer may not be able to easily identify the ambiguous factors that cause those particular things to carry meaning. Despite this, as with the actions of the surgical versus medical nurses, it is their presence or lack which cements within the viewer an impression.

In Chapter Three we will examine the role that some forms of ritual play in the formation of a group identity. Whilst in Chapter Four I will suggest that ritual has a role in affecting the way an individual receives and responds to a particular argument or line of thinking. At this stage the previously abandoned third factor, that of the necessary

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<sup>41</sup> Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Repr (London: Penguin, 1990), p. 40. Emphasis in original.

<sup>42</sup> Goffman, p. 40.

<sup>43</sup> Goffman, pp. 41–42.



performer, returns. Rather than attempt to say that a ritual must be performed by persons with a set authority, however, let us say that, to be efficacious upon the persons involved, the individual participant must recognise the validity of the performer – in cases such as the morning ritual this will be implied in itself as there is only one participant. We will say then that in this case a ritual is a performance which acts to foster a sense of meaning or identity in the participants. In chapter 2 this will be expanded further: it will be seen that the ritual performance fosters such questions of meaning and identity because it is *performative* (See ¶7).

As a final point it should be remembered that we previously expressed the concern that, under the definition of performance given, all behaviour could be described as a performance, thus making the defining of performance meaningless. In ¶4 we will build upon that concern, arguing that for the purposes of this discussion all (or almost all) behaviour may be viewed as a type of ritual.

#### ¶4. *On the interplay of play and ritual*

Envisage the totality of one's possible modes of Being<sup>44</sup> contained within an object boundary. They may be divided into two camps: those which are playful, and those which are unplayful (rather than taking up Sicart's assertion that playfulness is itself a mode, we will say it is simply a condition which a mode may or may not take on – that is to say modes of Being are generally either playful or unplayful modes). Within this area occurs ritual, which may happen in states both playful and non-playful, and may be conceived as an object floating to and fro. Visualise also areas in which occur “dark play”, that is play in which participants do not know that they are engaged in a game. One's mode of being may fluctuate during dark play, as one moves from playfulness to non-playfulness, awareness and non-awareness of the game, and so on and so on.

We may now begin to see that in at least some cases ritual is playful. Indeed under our model we can begin to realise that the same ritual may be performed in either a playful or an unplayful manner dependent upon the mode of Being in which the participant currently stands. When dark play occurs the ritual may even be both playful and unplayful as its perspective is different to different participants. We may understand

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<sup>44</sup> N.B: in the fourth chapter of this thesis modes of Being shall be discussed in more detail from a Heideggerian perspective in which they are clearly linked to the concept of “attunement”, which is linked to emotions

then, I suggest, that ritual at its core contains an element of play – that when ritual is “alive” it asks of its participants an element of engagement, of exploring the possibilities of how its individual elements may be put forth in the most effective manner. Play meanwhile, according to this understanding, is bound up in ritual: if, as we have suggested, human behaviour is ritual then play is ritual performed in a playful manner. We will thus say that play, for our purposes, is a type of ritual based upon experimenting with established patterns and behaviour. A “ritual of improvisation” so to speak

For the purposes of the rest of this thesis, from now on, we may assume that when I refer to “performance” I am, unless context suggests otherwise, referring specifically to rituals. These rituals compromise the majority of human behaviour in everyday life.

Perhaps the most interesting performances are those which occur within the sphere of “dark play” – those rituals in which some of the participants are unaware of the element of playfulness, and which carry with them as a result some sort of risk. The nature of dark play rituals can be contrasted very simply with regular rituals, both playful and unplayful. If the regular form of the ritual is an assertion of identity, that is it makes the statement: “this is my identity”, or “this is the sort of person I am – this is a thing I believe, a thing which I habitually do”, then dark play rituals are the rituals of questioning. They are the rituals which, rather than making a statement of assertion, ask “is this my identity?” They are by far the most dangerous rituals, as they carry within them the risk that the answer to the unspoken question may not be the one which was expected; that the result may be a change within one’s identity which ripples across and changes the form of all of one’s rituals, resulting in a new form to and meaning of “this is my identity.”

## **§2 Theatrum Mundi**

In this section I will discuss the concept of the *theatrum mundi*, which offers a theatrical analogy for the world. After examining the various ways that the concept has been put forward in western philosophy I will also discuss its appearance in Indian philosophy, before explaining my own version of the *theatrum mundi* analogy which will be central to understanding the overall content of my thesis. Following this I will examine the role played by performance within this analogy – this will be done through an examination

of Baudrillard's concept of hyperreality as well as the concept of performativity as originated with Austin and developed by thinkers such as Butler, Derrida, and Lyotard.

I will further discuss this in light of Schechner's claims that there is a noticeable difference between ritual and entertainment showing that the important distinguishing characteristic of ritual is its performativity, which I will use to make the perhaps controversial claim that many of the performed rituals which we enact as a part of everyday life act in such a way as to cause a notable effect on one's ontic status. From this a conclusion will be reached which shows that Being itself to some extent, or at least that form of Being which we might, to use Heidegger's language, term *Da-Sein* (that is to say the expression of Being expressed by Humanity), is intrinsically intertwined with performance. Such a thesis will in essence claim that our general behaviour is tied up in rituals, some conscious but many unconscious, which cause visible changes to be made in status, relationships, perception of self and others, and so on. It will therefore cause such performances to be seen as ontological in nature.

### ¶5 *The Concept*

The concept of the *theatrum mundi* (lit. theatre of the world) is one which applies the analogy of the theatrical stage to the world in which we exist and act. It may be seen, as suggested by Puchner, to cause the world and the theatre to form a type of complementary mirror image – “not only [can the] theatre now represent the world...the world can now be seen as a theatre.” The exact manner in which the concept is presented is not a clearly defined one: Puchner recognises “four distinct varieties”<sup>45</sup>.

Firstly, “the conception that the world is a theatre for the gods...keyed to a divine observer.”<sup>46</sup> In this variety the world is simply being observed by the gods, as passive spectators.

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<sup>45</sup> Martin Puchner, ‘The Problem of the Gound: Martin Heidegger and Site-Specific Performance’, in *Encounters in Performance Philosophy: Theatre, Performativity and the Practice of Theory*, ed. by Laura Cull and Alice Lagaay (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp. 65–86 (p. 70).

<sup>46</sup> Puchner, ‘The Problem of the Ground’, p. 70.

The second variety extends further by having the gods “start to intervene actively, thus becoming directors”<sup>47</sup> in a tradition that can be traced back to Plato’s claim that “humans are ‘a plaything of god.’”<sup>48</sup> This version becomes a somewhat more complicated variant in that it introduces questions of free will and divine intervention, issues which make it a mine of interesting theological discussion whilst making it (along with the first variant) of less value to our purposes for that same reason: the theological nature presupposes a higher power as observer.

The third variant, characterised by placing “the emphasis not on the spectator or director, but on the actors”<sup>49</sup> can be seen to in some way mitigate this by drawing attention away from the divine outside observer. This version is problematic in its own manner however, as it “describes a world of fixed roles from which there is, or should be, no escape.”<sup>50</sup> Whilst this may not per se seem to be taking away the possibility of free will, it certainly seems to be arguing for a particularly fatalistic viewpoint in which one should conform to the societal expectation put in place by one’s station in life – emphasised by the quotation from Erasmus that “If someone should try to strip away the costumes and makeup from the actors performing a play on the stage, and to display them to the spectators in their own natural appearance, wouldn’t he ruin the whole play?”<sup>51</sup> Indeed, by encouraging a view of the world in such terms the question is raised as to whether we are not in fact enacting a form of social control – encouraging the individual to “know their place” and be happy with it.

Puchner’s fourth version of *theatrum mundi* remains somewhat problematic – it “aims at characterising the ontological status of the world by describing it as mere theatre”<sup>52</sup> and thus cynically dismisses much of it as “nothing but spectacle”<sup>53</sup>. This model may seem popular to many of a more spiritual bent, or perhaps even to those armchair philosophers who prefer to look beyond the world of our experiences in favour of some more “real” metaphysical realm, however this dismissing of the real as unreal is a reason that we should treat such an approach with some caution.

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<sup>47</sup> Puchner, ‘The Problem of the Ground’, p. 70.

<sup>48</sup> Puchner, ‘The Problem of the Ground’, p. 70 Citing Plato’s Laws 803c.

<sup>49</sup> Puchner, ‘The Problem of the Ground’, p. 71.

<sup>50</sup> Puchner, ‘The Problem of the Ground’, p. 71.

<sup>51</sup> Puchner, ‘The Problem of the Ground’, p. 71 Citing Erasmus’s Praise of Folly.

<sup>52</sup> Puchner, ‘The Problem of the Ground’, p. 71.

<sup>53</sup> Puchner, ‘The Problem of the Ground’, p. 71.

The running criticism that we may make of Puchner's four varieties of the *theatrum mundi* is that they share a lack of emphasis on the world as we experience it – in the first two varieties because the emphasis is on the world as it is viewed by an outside spectator, in the fourth because the emphasis is on the unreality of that world, and in the third, whilst there may be space for such an emphasis, yet the aforementioned problem of societal control results in the world as a very strictly scripted and staged theatre, lacking a room for concepts of improvisation or exploration.

Richard Schechner meanwhile observes the concept of the *theatrum mundi* in only two “variants” – the “widely accepted opinion [in Renaissance Europe] that the world was a great theatre”<sup>54</sup> in which “everyday life was theatrical [and] conversely theatre offered a working model of how life was to be lived”<sup>55</sup> and a more recent version which “took shape with the convergence of a variety of approaches beginning shortly after the end of the Second World War and continuing to the present.”<sup>56</sup>

This modern variant is not specifically defined by Schechner, however it can be seen to be tied up in the thought of various 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophers, beginning with J.L. Austin. The input of Austin can be found in the posthumously-published *How To Do Things With Words*, a transcript of Austin's 1955 William James Lectures in which he examines the concept of the performative – that is those utterances which “do not ‘describe’ or ‘report’ or constata anything at all... and.. [where] the uttering of the sentence is, or is part of, the doing of an action”<sup>57</sup> – that is to say, sentences which are themselves actions. Such phrases, the naming of a ship, the placing of a bet, a vow of marriage, could be said to be those which symbolise a change in status on some level (be it ontic, semiotic, or legal). Lyotard observes that “the distinctive feature of [the] performative utterance is that its effect upon the referent coincides with its enunciation... That this is so is not subject to discussion or verification by the addressee, who is immediately placed within the new context created by the utterance.”<sup>58</sup> In the tradition of Wittgenstein he dubs the performative one form of

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<sup>54</sup> Schechner, *Performance Studies*, p. 8.

<sup>55</sup> Schechner, *Performance Studies*, p. 8.

<sup>56</sup> Schechner, *Performance Studies*, p. 10.

<sup>57</sup> J. L. Austin and J. O. Urmson, *How to Do Things with Words*, 2. ed., repr (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2009), p. 5.

<sup>58</sup> Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Theory and History of Literature, Repr (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 2005), p. 9.

language game, that is “each of the various categories of utterance can be defined in terms of rules specifying their properties and the uses to which they can be put – in exactly the same way as the game of chess is defined by a set of rules determining the properties of each of the pieces, in other words, the proper way to move them.”<sup>59</sup>

Lyotard then takes the bold step of linking such performatives to a wider everyday application:

*The production of proof, which is in principle only part of an augmentation process designed to win agreement from the addressees of scientific messages...falls under the control of another language game, in which the goal is no longer truth, but performativity – that is, the best possible input/output equation.*<sup>60</sup>

He argues that performatives are intrinsically linked with power, or rather that it is through the gathering of knowledge that power is gained, and that performatives act to create such knowledge such that “the performativity of an utterance...increases proportionally to the amount of information about its referent one has at one’s disposal”<sup>61</sup> - the more information one has, the more power the performative which declares that information. Thus it becomes that the value of a system becomes linked to its performance – the stronger the performance the more power and thus the greater value is created. Resultantly “research sectors that are unable to argue that they contribute even indirectly to the optimization of the system’s performance are abandoned by the flow of capital... The criterion of performance is explicitly invoked by the authorities to justify their refusal to subsidize certain research centres.”<sup>62</sup>

This apparent semantic trick – the slide from the performative to the performance, allows us to illustrate one direction of the concept of the postmodern *theatrum mundi*, the world in which performativity creates reality, with the creation of new knowledge being a source of power (and thus availability of funding to create more knowledge etc) taking precedence over the simple observation of that which was already known.

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<sup>59</sup> Lyotard, p. 10.

<sup>60</sup> Lyotard, p. 46.

<sup>61</sup> Lyotard, p. 47.

<sup>62</sup> Lyotard, p. 47.

Other thinkers have expressed the concept of performativity in modern life in other, equally interesting manners. Judith Butler offers a view which is helpful to the larger concept of the *theatrum mundi*, claiming that “performativity is not just about speech acts. It is about bodily acts.”<sup>63</sup> She expands on this with the observation that “we say something, and mean something by what we say, but we also do something with our speech, and what we do, how we act upon another language, is not the same as the meaning we consciously convey.”<sup>64</sup> The reference to bodily acts as performative here is interesting, as it implies that our behaviours act as a form of performance which causes something to be done: an imparting of meaning, just as that which is put forth by speech. In terms of Butler’s own writing this is perhaps most evident in her claim of the performativity of gender, that is to say that gender is comprised not by biological features or functions but rather by the carrying out of the behaviours which create a particular gender image – actions as creative performance. By focussing on these creative actions Butler, per Vicki Kirby, “maintains that a commitment to identity, one which considers the content of categories such as sex, gender and sexuality to be self-evident and unambiguous, will inevitably deny the complex reality of people’s lives and the impure histories of political struggle.”<sup>65</sup> In other words it might be said that Butler’s performatives acknowledge the participation of both the “performer” and the “audience” – the actions which cause an individual to be gendered in a particular way do so in part because of a shared understanding that this action is male gendered and that behaviour female. This concept, viewed more broadly, ties into our idea of the *theatrum mundi* as we might claim that speech and action act in a performative manner, unconsciously creating a particular message or image of the performer to those who occupy nearby space in the world. This is a thread which will be picked up in much greater detail in the following chapter, whilst the more specific issue of gender will be discussed again in the third chapter.

Whilst the concept of *theatrum mundi* has been concentrated on so far as a western phenomenon, it can be found also in Eastern philosophy albeit in a rather different form. In particular, a related concept is to be found in Indian philosophy under the heading of “Maya-Lila”. Schechner identifies the concept with that of play, offering it as a direct

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<sup>63</sup> Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York ; London: Routledge, 2004), p. 198.

<sup>64</sup> Butler, *Undoing Gender*, p. 199.

<sup>65</sup> Vicki Kirby, *Judith Butler: Live Theory*, Live Theory (London ; New York: Continuum, 2006), p. 19.

contrast to the “western archetype of reality”.<sup>66</sup> He notes that “maya and lila are hard words to translate because their meanings shift according to whether one is emphasising the delights of the world...or the desire to end all desire”<sup>67</sup> and indeed that a wealth of scholarship has been written on the matter, however it is possible to pin down that the original meaning of “maya” was “real”, but that “it was not long before maya became identified with the creative force as such”<sup>68</sup> and later on to also carry connotations of “illusion” and unreality – a paradoxical reversal in meaning, which can be seen in the largely Hindu concept that life is illusion. Meanwhile, “lila is a more ordinary word meaning play, sport, or drama.”<sup>69</sup> The two combine into a single concept in which reality is created through play: “Gods in their lilas make maya, but so do ordinary people, each of whom shares in the indenticality of individual [Self] with the absolute”.<sup>70</sup> Schechner identifies maya-lila not directly with actors performing upon the stage but with “the presence of the performer enacting the ‘not’ of her role: the Ophelia who is not there, who never was there. Ophelia can only exist in the playing field between rehearsal, performance, dramatic text, performance texts, spectators, and readers.”<sup>71</sup> This can perhaps be seen to resonate most closely with the *theatrum mundi* identified by Puchner as centred upon the actor – but whereas the western *theatrum mundi* emphasises the actor playing out their role on the stage of the world, maya-lila concentrates on the metaphysics of the performance – the creation of an illusionary world on the stage which is created from the physical location.

We see, then, two very different approaches emerging to the analogy of the world as a performance: the Western approach of the ritualised world and the Indian approach of the playful improvised world. Rather than see these views as opposed, however, we will attempt to find a harmony within them. Carrying forward the previously stated thesis that play and ritual are in fact intrinsically part of the same activity and cannot be found mutually exclusively, we will take for our purposes a starting point of a “*theatrum mundi*” analogy in which the world can be viewed in terms of a staged performance, combining improvisation alongside essentially set roles and expectations (in other words the social constructs within which our society functions.) As this

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<sup>66</sup> Richard Schechner, *The Future of Ritual: Writings on Culture and Performance*, 1. paperback ed (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 28.

<sup>67</sup> Schechner, *The Future of Ritual*, p. 28.

<sup>68</sup> Schechner, *Performance Studies*, p. 105.

<sup>69</sup> Schechner, *The Future of Ritual*, p. 29.

<sup>70</sup> Schechner, *The Future of Ritual*, p. 29.

<sup>71</sup> Schechner, *The Future of Ritual*, p. 30.



chapter continues we will seek to expand this analogy out into something new, a postmodern *theatrum mundi* so to speak which, whilst maintaining the classic aspects of the metaphor, adapts them to our modern times.

#### ¶6 *Performance in the Theatrum mundi*

Richard Schechner offers the following observation, contrasting the performative power of a ritual performed by tribespeople to a theatrical “ritual” made by performance artists in the west:

*Performance artists created...home-made rituals where changes like those achieved [via a ritual performed with the intent of avoiding warfare between two groups] at Kurumugl are sought. But a contradiction undermines these efforts. At Kurumugl enough actual wealth and people could be assembled in one place so that what was done by means of performance effected definite economic, political, and social power. In contemporary western societies only a charade of power can be displayed at theatrical performances; or the actual changes played through by the performance artists affect very few people. When artists, or their audience, recognise that these staged ‘rituals’ are mostly symbolic activities masquerading as effective acts, a feeling of helplessness overcomes them. The so-called ‘real events’ are revealed as metaphors. Governments can organise large-scale displays – parades of military hardware, for example –but far from effecting change these rituals are designed to forestall change.<sup>72</sup>*

Schechner refers here to two distinct performances: the ritual at Kurumugl in Papua New Guinea was one in which two rival tribes were brought together in a neutral ground selected by the government for “a ritual combat in which the guests assaulting Kurumugl in a modified war dance, armed with fighting spears, as the campers at Kurumugl defended their ground and the immense stack of meat piled in the centre of it. Instead of a secret raiding party there were dancers; instead of taking human victims, they took meat. And instead of doubt about the social outcome everyone knew what was

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<sup>72</sup> Richard Schechner, *Performance Theory*, Routledge Classics (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 127–28.

going to happen.”<sup>73</sup> The ritual featured an intermingling of the warriors from the two tribes and a transferral of prepared goat meat from the hosts to the visitors, and acted very clearly as a performative: “something had happened during the performance. The performance both symbolized and actualised the changed in status...Dancing and giving-taking the meat more than symbolised the changed relationship between hosts and invaders, it was the change itself.”<sup>74</sup> Thus, “warfare has been transformed into dancing.”<sup>75</sup> The second performance is the “home-made” ritual created by the performance artist, which unlike the ritual of the Kurumugl is not performative: it is a mere pretence.<sup>76</sup> A point that we must draw on is that in both cases the ritual is man-made: the Kurumugl ritual was ordained by the government as a way to avoid conflict by changing the status of the rival tribes whilst the ‘false’ ritual was created by the performance artist to try and mimic the performative effect of the Kurumugl ritual and its ilk. The distinction is one which lies at the heart of the very concept of performativity: the Kurumugl ritual has its tangible effect because it brings together enough people in agreement with it to do so, whilst the home-made ritual has an effect on at most a limited number of people. This can be seen to tie in with Austin’s insistence that a performative requires a form of official recognition in order to be valid:

*Suppose, for example, I see a vessel on the stocks, walk up and smash the bottle at the stern, proclaim ‘I name this ship the Mr. Stalin’ and for good measure kick away the chocks: but the trouble is, I was not the person to name it (whether or not – an additional complication – Mr. Stalin was the destined name; perhaps in a way it is even more of a shame if it was). We can all agree*

*(1) that the ship was not thereby named;*

*(2) that it is an infernal shame.*<sup>77</sup>

In the case of the ship, despite the actions of the “ritual” of its naming being carried out, there has been no performative effect due to the one carrying out the actions lacking the

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<sup>73</sup> Schechner, *Performance Theory*, p. 125.

<sup>74</sup> Schechner, *Performance Theory*, p. 127.

<sup>75</sup> Schechner, *Performance Theory*, p. 127.

<sup>76</sup> Is it possible to draw a link here to Plato’s criticism of the artist, as creating a work which is a shadow of the real world which is itself a shadow of the forms, just as the western performance artist creates rituals which are shadows of the real rituals which themselves are at heart representations e.g. with dancing representing warfare

<sup>77</sup> Austin and Urmson, p. 23.

authority to do so: an authority which stems not from some strange ethereal power within the ritual but from the common consent of those involved to allow it to be performative. Similarly in the home-made “ritual” it is a lack of common consent from the wider society within which the performance artist is acting, and the recognition by the audience of that lack, that prevents any true performativity.

The ritual at Kurumugl itself is an area which is potentially ripe for analysis. Schechner was present for the entirety of the ritual, at times interacting with the tribespeople between stages, and so was able to see first-hand some of the more interesting issues which arose, for instance the man who he watched applying makeup:

*He set out a mirror and some tins of pigment (bought from a trading store run by Japanese). Then he applied blue, red, and black to his torso, shoulders, arms, and face. He painted half his nose red and the other half blue. I asked him what the patterns meant. He said he chose them because he liked the way they looked. The Australian Aborigines, by contrast, adorn their bodies with patterns each detail of which is linked to ancestral or Dreamtime beings, sexual magic, or recent events. Aborigine body painting is map-making and story-telling.<sup>78</sup>*

Whilst without further information it would be a mistake to assume that the tribal war paint would, at one stage in the past, have had meaning similar to that of the Australian Aborigines, there are certainly other related factors worthy of attention: the makeup was purchased at a trading store, and further the store was run not by members of the tribe, but “by Japanese” – denizens of another country on another continent. Already then the ritual has been contaminated by influences from outside the original tribal culture, in some sense taking on an element of what we might dub postmodernism in that it allows for the collapse of a traditional structure of sorts – an intermingling of cultures.

Schechner notes that this sense of outside influence has caused a relationship with technology to emerge within the tribes which is very different to if they had developed such things themselves:

*As these people become “technified” (they already have planes before cars, TV before newspapers), they will leap not into the twentieth*

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<sup>78</sup> Schechner, *Performance Theory*, p. 123.

*century but beyond, going directly from preindustrial tribalism to postmodern tribalism. The big difference between the two is that pre-industrial tribalism scatters power among large numbers of competing local leaders; postmodern tribalism can easily become collective, mass, megapolitical. I mean by tribalism the shaping of social roles not through individual choices but by collective formation...Postmodern tribalism is medievalism under the auspices of technology.*<sup>79</sup>

Under the auspices of technology in what sense? Is it that technology in some way changes the manner in which social roles are collectively formed? This would seem to be obvious from the fact that power has gone from being held by “competing local leaders” to being “collective”: if social roles were previously in some way dictated in relation to the few power holders, they are now dictated in relation to the group. And it is indeed an emphasis on the group which separates Schechner’s tribalism from other, non-tribal, cultures, as emphasised by his observation that it (tribalism) features “the disappearance of solitude and one-to-one intimacy as these have developed in the west since the Renaissance.”<sup>80</sup> The influences of other cultures are seen throughout the costumes of the ritual participants, who wore “amalgams of traditional and imported stuff; sunglasses and bones stuck through the septum [septum?]; cigarette holders and home-made tobacco pipes; khaki shorts and grass skirts”<sup>81</sup> but yet the culture is still decidedly separate, it is “medievalism under the auspices of technology”: through making them a part of the performance of an established ritual the tribespeople make these things all a part of the tribal identity, integrating them into the group as a whole (a marked irony: in western culture such trinkets might be used as an outward signifier of the individual identity, a method of showing separateness from the group which can give rise to the solidarity which Schechner observes is missing in postmodern tribalism.)

Are we in the west also to some extent under the auspices of technology? Schechner notes that the ever-present eye of the television camera influences our behaviour:

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<sup>79</sup> Schechner, *Performance Theory*, pp. 123–24.

<sup>80</sup> Schechner, *Performance Theory*, p. 124.

<sup>81</sup> Schechner, *Performance Theory*, p. 124.

*Many guerrilla theatre events, terrorist acts, kidnappings, assassinations, and street demonstrations – not to mention more banal happenings such as press conferences, dedications of public buildings, parades – are theatricalized in order to catch the TV eye... apparently two-person exchanges between activist and authority are actually three-person interactions, with the invisible spectator being the addressee of last resort.*<sup>82</sup>

On one level this is simply an obvious comment on the power of the media, and the knowledge of those who wish to get the eye of the public that they can use it to their advantage (could the events of September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 have occurred in a time before global news structures as we have today? Perhaps, but surely not with the same impact) but in the age of the internet, with every phone a potential vector to transmit an everyday encounter to a million desktops via Youtube things become more complicated. Every activist could be filming, and indeed so might every authority (with body-worn cameras for police officers becoming more accepted as a method of protection both for the officer and the member of the public with whom they interact). Every individual is a potential reporter with a potential character, and resultantly every raised voice becomes the potential activist, or indeed the potential authority.

Perhaps then, as this attitude to technology becomes further intertwined in our lives, it reflects our actions. Could it be that the observer in our *theatrum mundi* analogy can become quite literally the whole world *in potentia*? As we become more used to the concept that everybody could be a potential viewer of our behaviour, our identity becomes tied in with how we present ourselves to that everybody – even the ritual performed in private becomes one which is enacted as though the world at its computer is the possible viewer. We will return to this point shortly, after the following detour.

Schechner places a distinction between ritual and entertainment, highlighted by the distinction between the Kurumugl ritual and the “theatrical” ritual in the passage above – we can say that the distinction, at least to an extent, is that ritual is performative whilst entertainment is not. Following this we might perhaps say that the difference is variable to the individual: the ritual which to the individuals in one community causes a change in the ontic status of the individuals involved may to outsiders seem frivolous and insensible. Consider for example the ordainment of an individual to the office of Pope: this can be seen as performative on multiple levels. On one level, the ceremony results in his becoming Pope: this is an objective occurrence that for the most part will be

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<sup>82</sup> Schechner, *Performance Theory*, p. 123.

commonly accepted by everyone, even those who do not accept the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church (although of course there may be exceptions – see for instance those groups who whilst nominally Catholic do not consider a particular Pope to have validly held his office), whilst on another level there will be certain performative elements which are only recognised by Roman Catholics (such as his being appointed a successor to St. Peter, a status explicitly rejected by most other Christian denominations as well as implicitly by anybody who does not hold to the religious tenets of the Roman Catholic Church.) What will be the effect if we scale back this example to a smaller scale?

Consider a hypothetical religious group of small size, say less than a thousand members most of whom are concentrated into one small area. Within this group a very ornate and public ritual is performed which anoints one individual into an almost-messianic position. To the members of the group this ritual has had the performative aspect of causing the person to become specially set out as an important figure, perhaps a representative of God, perhaps even, in their opinion, someone granted with special powers of prophecy or miracle granting. From that internal perspective the ritual has caused these things to happen, regardless of whether any such thing is objectively the case. However, what is the performative value to those outside the group? Unlike the Pope, this individual does not have such a large level of support from followers or worldwide renown to be particularly notable outside of the community of believers. In fact even those outsiders who observed the ritual will undoubtedly not recognise any significant change to have occurred as a result of it; the performative element will be practically non-existent to them. However, it may well be that to such individuals the ritual has taken on a value of entertainment: it is an ornate public display filled with pomp and ceremony and so acts as an enjoyable way to spend a few hours, but offers them no more substance than an entertaining cartoon. For a rather morbid real-life example consider the popular cultural phrase applied to describe the attitude of people who have adopted beliefs considered to be egregiously incorrect or foolish without giving any critical thought to the matter: “drinking the Kool-Aid”. This is a reference to the 1978 “Jonestown Massacre”, in which 909 members of the *People’s Temple* commune died after consuming poisoned Flavour Aid: a very real, very serious event reduced to spectacle and sarcasm lacking any implied understanding of the gravity of that which is referenced.

“Rituals”, of the sort we are discussing, may not always be as overt as those scripted and structured rituals which are found within organised groups, however. They may also be unconscious: I propose that many everyday behaviours are unconscious rituals which act to cause a reinforcement or creation of elements of personal identity. In the manner, we might say, that the performances occurring in the *theatrum mundi* are for the most part internalised ritual performances. Consider within this context the example of Zarathustra’s Ape: “Here...a frothing fool with hands outstretched sprang at him and blocked his path. But this was the fool the people called ‘Zarathustra’s Ape’: for he had learned something of the composition and syntax of language and perhaps also liked to borrow from his store of wisdom.”<sup>83</sup> In Nietzsche’s writing, Zarathustra’s ape is a man who attempts to mimic the words used by Zarathustra, but who does not in fact understand the rationale behind him. In his short appearance he advises Zarathustra to avoid entering “the great city”, calling down condemnation upon it. Yet, although Zarathustra notes that the criticism is true, he notes also that the reasoning behind it is missing, and thus the fool belongs to the city that he will so avoid. Can we apply this metaphor to the general rituals performed within the *theatrum mundi*? We might say that we are constantly performing various rituals which have a performative role in presenting our identity, but that there is often either a lack of awareness as to the nature of said ritual, or perhaps of the fact that any ritual is occurring at all (thus their unconscious nature.) We are all thusly Zarathustra’s ape!

Returning to our metaphor, let us propose the following: just as postmodern tribalism is medievalism under the auspices of technology, so too the postmodern *theatrum mundi* is defined by ritual under the auspices of technology. As we have already said, the reality of possible mass surveillance not by some strange government entity but rather by the completely unrelated masses, combined with the ability for any surveillance footage to be transmitted worldwide at the click of a thousand retweet buttons, causes every person to be at all times a performer for the world *in potentia*; but let us add to this two things:

Firstly, the effect of technology directly upon ritual: as the Kurumugl ritual sees an influx of cultural adaptation and appropriation as a result of technology’s influence, so too has technology changed the way in which many western “rituals” occur, from the

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<sup>83</sup> Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche and R. J. Hollingsworth, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for Everyone and No One*, Penguin Classics (London: Penguin, 1961), p. 195.

ability to broadcast their recording in order to allow detached viewers to vicariously participate to the adoption of audio or visual amplifiers, visual aids such as PowerPoint, and other such augmentations into the performing of centuries old activities.

Secondly, let us consider Jean Baudrillard's concept of hyperreality – “the generation by models of a real without origin or reality.”<sup>84</sup> To Baudrillard the world we inhabit is essentially false – drawing upon Borges's illustration of an empire which so prized the practice of cartography that it created a perfectly scaled map the exact size of the empire itself, he suggests that a distinction between the real and the representation of the real has become lost: that we exist within and seek after a continuation of a simulation disconnected from the original source reality. In the original Borges story, the “Map of the Empire whose size was that of the Empire, and which coincided point for point with it”<sup>85</sup> is seen by those who came later as useless, and allowed to be destroyed, yet parts of it remain: “In the Deserts of the West, still today, there are Tattered Ruins of that Map, inhabited by Animals and Beggars”.<sup>86</sup> The inhabiting of the scraps of map by the animals and beggars leads to an interesting image – if the map was a perfect replica of the land beneath it, do they live on scraps aligned to the ground they cover? Further if there are now scraps being inhabited was it the case that previously the entire map was inhabited by its own creators? The map has become Baudrillard's simulacra covering the real, but with its exacting scale resulting perhaps in the distinction between the two being so slight that it can serve as a habitat.

To Baudrillard those things which are plainly not real can be seen to exist in order to hide the general unreality of the world – he points to Disneyland, a theme park set up to purposefully present a world separate from that which exists outside, such that “the contrast with the absolute solitude of the park lot...is total.”<sup>87</sup> When in the Disneyland park one is constantly aware that one is in an environment that is invented to provide enjoyment in a fantasy world; but to Baudrillard in doing so it “make[s] us believe that

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<sup>84</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, The Body, in Theory (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), p. 1.

<sup>85</sup> Jorge Luis Borges, ‘On Exactitude in Science’, trans. by Andrew Hurley <<https://www.sccs.swarthmore.edu/users/08/bblonder/phys120/docs/borges.pdf>> [accessed 20 January 2016].

<sup>86</sup> Borges.

<sup>87</sup> Baudrillard, p. 12.



the rest is real, whereas all of Los Angeles and the America that surrounds it are no longer real, but belong to the hyperreal order”.<sup>88</sup>

Does the theme of technology show up in the account of hyperreality? Certainly in the case of the Borges text, that is used as illustration, the heart of the simulacra is a technology, that of the map which perfectly replicates the actual world. Likewise the created environment of Disneyland may be seen as a form of technology created to distract from the real world, drawing the visitor instead into “the happiest place on Earth” – a land where all of the inhabitants (or at least the staff members, euphemistically referred to as the ‘cast’) are performers carrying out proscribed roles in order to enhance the illusion (indeed their title as cast members helps to push forward this idea, by viewing them in theatrical terms).

Hyperreality adds a new layer to our postmodern *theatrum mundi*. If the world can be seen in terms of a simulacra then we can see the idea that the performance is not “real” – it creates a fictional representation which distracts from the real world, just as the performance watched in the real theatre acts as an entertaining distraction. The rituals of the *theatrum mundi* are therefore rituals which, whilst being performatives and so reinforcing (and even creating) an ontic status for the participants (and indeed the observers, who themselves become indirect participants) do so in a manner which is detached from the “real”: these ontic statuses are not things which we may necessarily point directly to, but rather they exist only by the common consent of, those direct and indirect participants.

It is in this context that we return to the final lines of Schechner’s statement, most notably the claim that: “Governments can organise large-scale displays...but far from effecting change these rituals are designed to forestall change.” What exactly does Schechner mean by this and how does it apply? It comes of course in the context of the non-working nature of the home-made ritual created by the performance artist, the “symbolic activities masquerading as effective acts”. These acts lack the powers which are given to performatives, but why? And in what way is it that the government display forestalls change rather than effecting it? It is not that they are mere spectacle provided for entertainment, as the prevention of change indicates some active effect. Rather, the

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<sup>88</sup> Baudrillard, p. 12.

display of power in the hands of the government acts to prevent opposition precisely by displaying crudely and overtly that power, including the power to enact change, to grant performatives with their validity, rests with those putting on the display and not with the people. The government display may well in a sense create a form of hyperreality, and indeed could be seen as a type of ritual in the manner that we have ascribed, but rather than a ritual which affects the individual ontically it is one which merely causes the status quo to be seen and internalised, reinforced. We see that in this way, contrary to the impression Schechner, with his emphasis on the distinction between ritual and theatre, may give it is in fact the case that ritual and entertainment/theatre are closely intertwined; both on some level having an effect, albeit in different ways, the one with an active participation which can cause the participant to express and mould their ontology whilst the latter holds the spectator passive, dictating that ontology to them.

Before we continue there is one further, potentially very interesting, question which is in need of some clarification: the nature of the audience in our *theatrum mundi*, especially in those occasions where the performance may be described as “anonymous”. I have already suggested that under the auspices of technology the postmodern *theatrum mundi* is one in which there is a sense of constant observation. Such a scenario, as will be discussed in detail in ¶7, may lead us to an understanding of a world-stage in which all become the audience-spectator to all. What, though, of those performances in which the performer is unknown?

Such performances fall into several categories. For perhaps the most high-profile example of recent times we might point to the graffiti artist Banksy. Perhaps the most famous graffiti artist in the world, Banksy has left art in many different countries, had work displayed both officially and unofficially in various art galleries, much of his work is instantly recognisable, and yet his true identity has been kept a secret from the general public for almost 30 years. We might say that the true identity of Banksy is unimportant or irrelevant: Banksy has been interviewed on several occasions, and we have gained insight into his personality, political leanings, sense of humour, etc., through reading such interviews, through his art, and through other methods of communication. We know for instance, thanks to “the Pest control Office” website, that allegedly “many Banksy pieces are created in an advanced state of intoxication”<sup>89</sup>), thus

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<sup>89</sup> ‘What Is Pest Control?’ <<http://www.pestcontroloffice.com/whatispc.html>> [accessed 6 November 2017].

giving an apparent insight into his artistic process. The power of anonymity is that none of these things need necessarily be genuine. The key to such a performance is that the truth value of such things does not matter: they are true of the character known as “Banksy” even if they are not true of any real person. Through their combining to create a wider picture, the character of Banksy comes to eclipse the real individual behind the graffiti. The character becomes the focus and the actor is forgotten just as on the theatrical stage.

An alternative anonymous performance would be one in which the performer is not only unidentified, but lacks any identifying presence whatsoever. In a case where the perpetrator is unknown – for example in the recent incident in which “anonymous evangelical Anglicans posted a 95 Theses-style complaint on the doors of five British cathedrals”<sup>90</sup> – the anonymity may be said to have a disruptive effect. In the example of the notice on the cathedrals, a clear parallel can be drawn (especially given the timing on the week of the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation) to the traditional image of Martin Luther pinning his complaints to the door of the cathedral in Wittenberg. As will be discussed in Chapter 3, such a parallel is one which is standard within rituals. However there is a subversion in effect as, whereas Luther is pictured to have performed his act of defiance in plain view (the truth behind this picture being largely irrelevant – whilst it is largely recognised by scholars today that Luther’s nailing his theses to the door is a later invention, the maxim holds true that “when the legend becomes fact, print the legend”<sup>91</sup>), the initial anonymity of the Anglicans could be seen as lacking a vital element (and it is perhaps for this reason that the perpetrator would later reveal his identity and motives). This then is a performance in which the anonymity of the performer becomes an unavoidable issue in itself. Without a performer the audience is split into two: those who are aware of the performer (which will include the performer themselves) and those who are not. In the former group the ritual will include a demonstration of identity, whilst in the latter it will take on new and different meaning, with the ritual occurring largely being in reaction to the visible results of the performance after the event, rather than to the performance itself.

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<sup>90</sup> Tyler O’Neil November 2 and 2017 Chat 86 Comments, ‘Anglicans Pin 95 Theses-Style Complaint on LGBT Issues to Doors of 5 UK Cathedrals’, *Faith* <<https://pjmedia.com/faith/anglicans-pin-95-theses-style-complaint-on-lgbt-issues-to-doors-of-5-uk-cathedrals/>> [accessed 6 November 2017].

<sup>91</sup> John Ford, *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, 1962.

Another type of ritual may be said to bridge the two. This may be found best in the realm of political protest, in which an individual engaging in a particular action might disguise their identity, such that whilst they will be known to (some of) their co-actors, those who they are protesting against will see them as anonymous (or in the case of the most famous example of current times, in which protestors dress in Guy Fawkes masks, Anonymous). In such a case anonymity allows the individual to become not a character but rather a faceless representative of a concept larger than themselves.

In these three examples we see that the nature of the audience-spectator relationship in the *theatrum mundi* continues to some extent to be understood within the theatrical model. In the first, the performer becomes almost irrelevant, replaced by the character who they represent. In the third likewise the individual performer fades into the background for the spectator, allowing a larger concept to use them as a placeholder. The second scenario is likewise somewhat similar with the performer, in at least some of the cases, fading into the background; but the reasoning is to some extent different – whilst it is allowing the focus to become that of a larger character or concept this is not because of the actor's visible performance but rather because of the lack of it. We will return to the implications of this at the end of ¶7.

#### ¶7. *The Theatrum Mundi and the Co-Opticon*

Michel Foucault, in his 1975 work *Discipline & Punish*, examines Jeremy Bentham's prison design known as the *panopticon*, which he argues can be viewed as a model for societal control. The prison is described as follows:

*At the periphery, an annular building; at the centre, a tower; this tower is pierced with wide windows that open onto the inner side of the ring; the peripheric building is divided into cells, each of which extends the whole length of the building; they have two windows, one on the inside, corresponding to the windows of the tower; the other, on the outside, allows the light to cross the cell from one end to the other. All that is needed, then, is to place a supervisor in a central tower and to shut up in each cell a madman, a patient, a condemned man, a worker or a schoolboy. By the effect of backlighting, one can observe from the*

*tower, standing out precisely against the light, the small captive shadows in the cells of the periphery.*<sup>92</sup>

The design of the panopticon is set up so that the prisoner “is seen, but he does not see; he is the object of information, never a subject in communication”<sup>93</sup> and so the *panopticon* “induce[s] in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility”<sup>94</sup> and so “arrange things that the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action.”<sup>95</sup> The *Panopticon* then is a state of the few observing the many in order to cause behaviour to become self-regulated. This model is one which may be said to describe the current state of affairs in much of the western world – the ubiquity of CCTV creating a panoptical effect of constant surveillance of the masses by the government.

There are alternative theories however: Thomas Mathiesen notes that Foucault’s model is “a concept which strongly needs to be supplemented”<sup>96</sup> and that “as a striking parallel to the panoptical process, and concurring in detail with its historical development, we have seen the development of a unique and enormously extensive system enabling *the many to see and contemplate the few*, so that the tendency for the few to see and supervise the many is contextualised by a highly significant counterpart”<sup>97</sup>, which is to say the mass media. This model of the many observing the few, which Mathiesen terms the *synopticon*, is deemed an extension of the ancient practice of spectacle: whereas in previous times the people would gather together in one place to observe an event, now they gather in their own houses to watch the event on the television, or view it on the internet, or perhaps even read about it in their newspapers. To Mathiesen, Foucault has made the mistake of believing that the synoptical system has been replaced by a panoptical one during the development of new forms of societal control and the prison system; however he proposes that, instead, the two have evolved in parallel and work together. With our understanding of the world as *theatrum mundi*, however, we can now add a third element to the model which I will dub the *co-opticon*, and which is characterised by the many observing the many.

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<sup>92</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Penguin Social Sciences, Reprint (London: Penguin Books, 1991), p. 200.

<sup>93</sup> Foucault, p. 200.

<sup>94</sup> Foucault, p. 201.

<sup>95</sup> Foucault, p. 201.

<sup>96</sup> Thomas Mathiesen, ‘The Viewer Society: Michel Foucault’s “Panopticon” Revisited’, *Theoretical Criminology: An International Journal*, 1.2 (1997), 215–32 (p. 216).

<sup>97</sup> Mathiesen, p. 219.

Under co-opticism everyday behaviour can be understood in the context of behaviour, which is ritual, occurring on the stage of a *theatrum mundi* in which everyone is both spectator and actor – paralleling perhaps Boal’s discussion of the *spect-actor* in his *theatre of the oppressed*. At this point we will return to our previous discussion on the relationship between actor and audience.

Boal wishes to argue for “the liberation of the spectator”<sup>98</sup> such that “he too must be a subject, an actor on an equal plane with those generally accepted as actors, who must also be spectators.”<sup>99</sup> This sentiment, that the actor is also spectator places the actor-spectator relationship into a circular position wherein all participants are the one and the other at the same time. The many watching the many means that all are both watchers and watched at once. The relationship may even take on a personal dimension: the spect-actor in the co-opticon is watching him-or-herself. Thus it is that a ritual involving only a single individual in private may be said to retain an audience of one. This also means that there can be no such thing as a truly “anonymous” ritual – merely that the identity of the spect-actor may be known, unknown, relevant, or irrelevant at different levels at different times to different spect-actors.

Two questions may be raised about the co-optical model: the first is whether it is necessary, and the second is whether it relies on too shallow a reading of Foucault and Mathiesen. In the first case the question is based on the existence of the pan-and-syn-optical systems. If we are to understand the two as occurring concurrently, why should we require a third which may appear to simply encompass both? If this is the case then it seems that the first question is simply an extension of the second as it is implied that the necessity of the co-opticon is based on a shallow reading in which the differing models are merely opposing analogies. The second question is further heightened by the fact that both Foucault and Mathiesen concentrate in their analysis on the role of power and its application, an element which the co-opticon does not cover.

Drawing the threads together that we have so far discussed, we see a coherent whole created for a *theatrum mundi* model which will form a spine for the rest of this thesis. We have seen that the concept of the *theatrum mundi* is one in which the metaphor of

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<sup>98</sup> Augusto Boal, *Theater of the Oppressed* (London: Pluto Press, 1998), p. 155.

<sup>99</sup> Boal, p. 155.

the theatrical stage is used to describe the human condition of existing and acting in the world. The theory was compared and contrasted with the philosophy found in Indian philosophy of *maya-lila*, in which the world we experience is an illusion created by play. These two models can be said to have merged together as we moved into the more theoretical section of this chapter, in which a postmodern *theatrum mundi* was discussed. The idea of illusion can be seen in the “hyperreality” of Baudrillard’s concept of simulation: that the world is obscured by a fabricated world which we inhabit. We proposed that in the postmodern sense the *theatrum mundi* should be seen through a lens of the effects upon behaviour by technology: that in the age of mass surveillance and mass-voyeurism (with the few who are observed by the masses being observed in every tiny accessible detail of their private and personal lives, thanks to reporters leaving no stone unturned in their search for gossip) the world can be seen not as a stage on which the people perform for an unseen outside observer but rather one on which they perform for one another, acting as both observer and observed, archivist and archived.

The question we then must ask is, what is the nature of the performance in this postmodern *theatrum mundi*? We examined the power of rituals, which act as performatives – that is actions which cause an actual change in ontic status to occur – and suggested that the important actions which occur in the postmodern *theatrum mundi* are those which take on a level of ritual, either consciously or subconsciously, in order to state, reinforce, or emphasise our ontic position on the world stage.

### **§3 Methodological considerations**

#### *¶8. On anthropology*

Within several chapters of this thesis I will take an anthropological approach to discussing certain behaviours of performance, in particular examining particular rituals performed by various people. This approach will be in part as a result of the sources from whom I will be drawing – Richard Schechner, for instance, as well as being one of the founders of the field of performance studies is primarily an anthropologist – whilst in part it will be simply as a matter of choice. To some this may be seen as a point of criticism. Consider for example that Husserl is alleged to have accused Heidegger of writing “mere anthropology”, implying perhaps that to the philosopher the field of anthropology is one which is beneath us, and offers little value. In response to this, let us ask what exactly is anthropology? It is taken from the Greek *anthropos*, meaning man

or mankind and of course *logia*, a word requiring little introduction and which is now taken to refer to a branch of study. Anthropology then is the study of mankind, or of humanity. It is a field which draws many from other fields to further its reaches, including the field of philosophy. And if the field of anthropology can draw from philosophy, cannot philosophy draw back from anthropology, taking advantage of the new perspective put upon it through exposure to the other areas of the humanities? Certainly with its attempts to have a hand in every corner anthropology is broad enough to be covered within philosophical investigation in places where we might draw upon history, literary studies, ethnography, or the natural sciences. More specifically within the field of anthropology we will largely be drawing from what is known as cultural anthropology, described by Keesing and Strathern as “a narrower field concerned with the study of human customs – that is, the comparative study of cultures and society.”<sup>100</sup>

¶9. *Answering potential criticism*

some criticisms of the approach being taken in this thesis may be made. The first is directly related to a reliance on the methods of social anthropology: is it possible that these methods might lead to a misleading picture of human behaviours? Keesing and Strathern note that, in the past, the “fieldwork tradition, in which one studied a village or cluster of local communities to document ‘a culture,’ has produced a very misleading stereotype of some cultures, depicting each one as an integrated, unique experiment in human possibility [...] that had been there for centuries before the anthropologist arrived.”<sup>101</sup> An accidental reliance on stereotypes, it may be argued, could result in a misleading analysis of behaviour in general. Further, it may be suggested that the approach being taken, especially when drawing on sources such as Schechner in order to highlight rituals from various foreign cultures and draw parallels to the rituals performed back home in the west, implies some sort of innate cultural essence shared by all of humankind. The critic may suggest that in doing so I am committing some form of intellectual or academic colonialism, attempting to impose my own experiences and values onto other cultures and in doing so erasing their individual realities and differences. Such concerns are legitimate, but should be considered within the important context that this thesis is concentrating on the nature of performativity, a concept tied up in language. Heidegger when discussing his conversations with Japanese philosopher

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<sup>100</sup> Roger M. Keesing and Andrew Strathern, *Cultural Anthropology: A Contemporary Perspective*, 3rd ed (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1998), p. 4.

<sup>101</sup> Keesing and Strathern, p. 10.



Shuzo Kuki suggests that the root differences between Japanese and German resulted in a danger in the communication of ideas: “*He* could say in European languages whatever was under discussion. But we were discussing *Iki*; and here it was *I* to whom the spirit of the Japanese language remained closed – as it is to this day.”<sup>102</sup> Further he suggests a criticism of Kuki’s attempts to apply European philosophical concepts to Japanese thinking, noting that “the name “aesthetics” and what it names grow out of European thinking, out of philosophy. Consequently, aesthetic consideration must ultimately remain alien to Eastasian thinking.”<sup>103</sup> To Heidegger then, the differences in Japanese (or “Eastasian”) and European cultures and crucially the degree of difference in their languages was enough that one could not fruitfully apply the concepts from one to another.

Whilst such a strong division between cultures may be unwise, creating as it does the risk of arbitrarily labelling persons whose native language has different roots to one’s own as Other, it is certainly true that one’s phenomenological experience will be filtered through one’s language and culture. Performativity then is being examined in a context of the European philosophical tradition and it is from a “European” (albeit including the primarily European-influenced cultures in some non-European countries such as the USA) perspective that most examples are drawn. In those cases when non-European sources have been selected it is necessary to note that they have been presented in the concept of an existing European interpretation and that consequently such case studies should be viewed as studies not of the performance in itself (if such a thing exists) but rather of the interpretation of the performance given by an observer.

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<sup>102</sup> Martin Heidegger, ‘A Dialogue on Language’, in *On the Way to Language*, trans. by Peter D. Hertz, 1st Harper & Row pbk. ed (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1982), p. 4.

<sup>103</sup> Heidegger, ‘A Dialogue on Language’, p. 2.

## Chapter Two: Space, Action, and the Performative Utterance

Having spent the previous chapter examining the question of “what is performance”, and in doing so having reached an understanding that for our specific purposes “performance” should be seen as referring to specific type of ritualised behaviours, we shall now seek a deeper understanding of these behaviours through an analysis of their essential components. In particular we shall examine three elements which are common within all performances: those of space, action, and what we shall dub *utterance*. This analysis shall draw on several thinkers in the area including Martin Puchner and Michel de Certeau, and on the recent work of Jon Foley Sherman on the nature of “stage presence”. We shall offer a model in which space is seen to be a virtual area<sup>104</sup> created within a physical place by the conjoining of various factors, and within which the performance that is the object of our study occurs. Action shall be seen as the backbone of the performance and, within the context of the model presented in the previous chapter, we shall further divide action into a number of different types, which can each be seen as a different form of ritual, each with its own particular effect.

Finally, the performative utterance shall be seen as a “highlight” to the action. Though a potential point of criticism arises here: the performative, generally understood, is a speech act. Consequently it may be said that a performative is an action, and that a separation between performative and action is an incorrect one. In reply, the response will be this: that the role of the performative utterance in this model is to highlight the action such, that rather than a simple “dead” action, it takes on the power of having a ritual effect. This chapter will give a wider context to the concept of *theatrum mundi* put forth in the previous chapter, which will itself act as the central foundation for the second division of the thesis, and it is thus important that the concepts discussed within, and their implications, are articulated and developed as fully as possible.

In §1 I will examine the concept of space. This will be followed by action in §2 and utterance in §3. Having given each of these concepts a clear meaning and explanation of its role in performance, including case studies intended to highlight the more nuanced or unusual aspects of each. I shall put forth in §4 a demonstration of the manner in which the three can be seen to interact and intertwine within the *theatrum mundi*.

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<sup>104</sup> That is to say, an area which is and which acts, whilst not being present in a physical sense

## §1. Space

Before examining the nature of space, it should be remembered that the specific space of performance has been given a name in the previous chapter: it is the *theatrum mundi*, the world-as-stage. Just as we drew upon Puchner when discussing the *theatrum mundi*, so now shall we begin with his analysis of space.

Puchner declares that “for the theatre, the ground is an existential problem: theatre must take place somewhere.”<sup>105</sup> As it is for theatre, so it is for performance/rituals. A performance must take place somewhere, whether that place be physical or, thanks to modern uses of technology to mediate communication and interactions between people at great physical distances, ethereal.

What though does it mean for our performance to take place in a particular space? We shall first examine Puchner’s description of theatre’s usage of space, in order to determine if it may be applied more widely. “The theatre takes over existing ground and installs itself there, or else it creates its own grounds, laying the foundation for specifically designed theatrical spaces.”<sup>106</sup> We may say that this is obvious enough, if we consider any theatrical performance that we have seen. The classic image may be of the specifically designed theatrical space, bluntly put the building that we call the theatre, but most of us will have seen a performance put on at a community centre, a school, a church hall say. The power of the theatre is its ability to turn any suitable venue into a temporary stage. Puchner notes, significantly, that the theatre changes the nature of the venue, by causing it to be removed during the performance from its existing context:

*Greek tragedy originated in religious sites, around the altars to the God Dionysus. Japanese Kabuki theatre, by contrast, originated in the dry riverbeds of Kyoto, a place of disrepute. In London, the Globe Theatre, along with most other theatres, was forced to take residence outside the City of London on the South Side of the Thames. At the same time, the theatre has struggled to emancipate itself from these charged locales. Through this emancipation it managed to gain something invaluable: the ability to represent any place at will.<sup>107</sup>*

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<sup>105</sup> Puchner, ‘The Problem of the Ground’, p. 65.

<sup>106</sup> Puchner, ‘The Problem of the Ground’, p. 65.

<sup>107</sup> Puchner, ‘The Problem of the Ground’, p. 65.

This “emancipation” seems obvious: during the performance of a scene we can find ourselves believing that the theatrical stage is a room, a field, a boat, in Scotland, Denmark, Verona; that the floor of the school gym is the forest home of Snow White and the dwarves; that the church is a humble cottage.

In contrast to the emancipation is the site-centred performance, which Puchner sees as performances through which “theatres not only took place in particular locations but these locations, and their histories, became the primary subject matter of performance”.<sup>108</sup> This can be seen as very closely aligning to many of the most common rituals in our everyday lives, such as those of religion. For example the church and the temple are buildings created with the specific rituals of the faith in mind: the altar, the baptistery, the holy of holies. The “morning ritual” will be centred around the specific rooms in the participant’s house. And what of the fluctuation in Puchner’s theatre? Just as our everyday performances may be site-specific, can they also be site-emancipated? Before we may answer this question we must first ask: what exactly does it mean for our everyday performances to be site-emancipated? As we have said in the context of the theatrical space, emancipation from the ground is the ability of the stage to represent any place: as Puchner says: “the emancipation of the theatre from the ground and the construction of specifically theatrical (i.e. hollowed) places mean...that the theatre can now represent the world.”<sup>109</sup> The contrast must be with the site-specific theatre, which cannot be made to represent whatever it wishes, as the site itself is an integral part of the performance. We might then say that the site-emancipated performance is one in which the space of performance is not integral, and so may be allowed to represent whatever it will. However, it would in fact seem to be the case that this is not entirely the correct dichotomy. After all, the nature of the theatre as being emancipated from the ground is not necessarily the same as being emancipated from the site. Often the theatrical practitioner will be seen to intentionally manipulate the stage in order to further allow representing: the “hollowed” place may be filled in with stage dressing, props, and suchlike in order to make it that place which is represented. Thus for theatre the opposition to site-specific is not site-emancipated but rather we may say site-adaptive. The site-emancipated performance, on the other hand, does not cause the space in which it occurs to be made to represent some other space. Rather we might say that an emancipation not from the ground, but from site entirely would imply be this: that the performance does not rely upon occurring in a space which may be appropriated and

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<sup>108</sup> Puchner, ‘The Problem of the Ground’, p. 65.

<sup>109</sup> Puchner, ‘The Problem of the Ground’, p. 70.

made to represent whichever other space it requires. Rather the site-emancipated performance relies on no space, but at the same time is able to warp whatever space it might occur in, in order to make it the site of a performance. This should be seen as subtly different to the nature of the theatre, as the theatrical performance relies on a hollow space whereas the site-emancipated performance can appropriate any space to its needs.

So can our everyday performances indeed be site-emancipated? The answer we might say is yes: when the priest delivers home communion does not the living room become, temporarily, the church sanctuary just as the theatrical performance made the sanctuary represent temporarily a living room? Likewise the living room may become a classroom (for more on the ritual of academia see chapter 6), the street a gym or pub (especially perhaps for those underage drinkers who are barred from entering those spaces actually designated for such a purpose), and so on. Our performances are thus, like those of the theatre, found in a fluctuation: in this case between site-specificity and emancipation from the site, in the case of the theatre emancipation from the ground.

Moving on from Puchner, let us consider the poetic words of de Certeau:

*The ordinary practitioners of the city live “down below,” below the thresholds at which visibility begins. They walk – an elementary form of this experience of the city; they are walkers, Wandersmänner, whose bodies follow the thicks and thins of an urban “text” they write without being able to read it. These practitioners make spaces that cannot be seen: their knowledge of them is as blind as that of lovers in each other’s arms. The paths that correspond in this intertwining, unrecognized poems in which each body is an element signed by many others, elude legibility. It is as though the practices organizing a bustling city were characterized by their blindness. The networks of these moving, intersecting writings compose a manifold story that has neither author nor spectator, shaped out of fragments of trajectories and alterations of spaces: in relation to representations, it remains daily and indefinitely other.<sup>110</sup>*

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<sup>110</sup> Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. by Steven Rendall, Nachdr. (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 20), p. 93.

The “down below” in question is the city as it exists, contrasted to the bird’s-eye view seen from above (“where visibility begins”). De Certeau is discussing the city as it is lived in, directly experienced. The idea of the “walkers” creating a text suggests to us a performance that may be “read”, and further we are given a stark reading of the performance’s relation to space. De Certeau compares it to lovers’ bodies intertwined: space and the performance occurring in the space cannot be separated easily; they are intimately linked at the deepest levels. The space is more ethereal than the physical location however: de Certeau saying that, “the space is a practiced place. Thus the street geometrically defined by urban planning is transformed into a space by walkers.”<sup>111</sup> This can be seen to conform to the theatrical space: the stage itself is merely a marked off area, even in the site-specific performance. By performing upon it we cause it to become more, it becomes the theatrical space in which the actions of the performers take on new and special meaning. Likewise our ritual performance by its nature as a performance causes the physical place in which it occurs to become a ritual space, the performed space. The performance occurring within this space is “blind”: for our purposes we may say that the performance space is fluid. In part due to most rituals being entirely unseen to participants moving in and out of their particular performances passing, through participation, in those of others even whilst enacting their own. The “blind knowledge” may be understood as a familiarity: that the rituals are so well accepted, practiced, familiar; that they occur without any required conscious thought or awareness. They simply are.

Also of interest is the vantage point from which de Certeau is able to speak of this “down below”, for it is not any hypothetical city that is under analysis but rather “Manhattan from the 110<sup>th</sup> floor of the World Trade Centre.”<sup>112</sup> At the time of his writing the account, this would have been a vantage from the top of one of the tallest buildings in the world – the highest possible vantage in New York. This vantage point is one which we may no longer speak from: because of course in 2001 the building was destroyed in a terrorist attack. Just as the vantage point is no longer reachable, so is de Certeau’s criticism of the WTC vantage point, and yet as we shall see new and similar criticisms may be applied. The criticism made may be seen to be applied largely to the space created by the WTC, which is different to the space of the street. The criticism is that from that vantage point one is no longer a “walker” – a participant in the

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<sup>111</sup> Certeau, p. 117.

<sup>112</sup> Certeau, p. 91.

performance of the street-level rituals, but rather a “voyeur” who watches that performance in a detached manner: “when one goes up there, he leaves behind the mass that carries off and mixes up in itself any identity of authors or spectators.”<sup>113</sup> He claims that “the World Trade Centre is only the most monumental figure of Western urban development”<sup>114</sup> which allows the viewer, from their high vantage point, to become not merely voyeurs but “voyeur-gods.”<sup>115</sup> This space that is the high vantage point allows the so-called voyeur-god to “read” the performance of the city down below, as was previously discussed, and with this apparent ability comes an implication of condemnation: Certeau uses the language of Icarus, of voyeurs, of gods, implications of hubris abounding.

The WTC is representative then of a space which brings forward negative traits of humanity which bring with them the risk of a terrible fall. We might suggest that the space of the WTC complex continued to carry on this implication right up until the end, when just such a fall was enacted at the hands of those who wished to strike at a societal attitude related to that against which Certeau levels his condemnation. Is the terrorist attack, perhaps even especially that which intentionally costs the terrorist his own life, perhaps a shining example of just the sort of performance that we are discussing in these pages? This question is no doubt tendentious and controversial, but the taking of innocent lives and the spreading of fear, terror, hatred amongst the victim’s population in a manner which raises the profile of the attacking ideology is surely a very firm cementing of identity on behalf of the terrorist. In the case of the suicide attack it is perhaps the ultimate ritual: final and concrete in a manner which states an identity which may no longer have any hope of changing. Fittingly the collapse of the towers and later demolition of the rest of the complex as a result of damage caused during the attacks did not end the role of the WTC as a space for important rituals which might be seen to bring out much that is wrong with the participants, even to the extent of blotting out an opportunity for good.

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<sup>113</sup> Certeau, p. 92.

<sup>114</sup> Certeau, p. 93.

<sup>115</sup> Certeau, p. 93.

Consider for instance the case of the ground zero cross<sup>116</sup>. The “cross” was simply a steel cross-beam found in the wreckage of the buildings, yet became to many a symbol of hope in the midst of a great tragedy. More interestingly, however, is that to some it would have an opposite effect, one which highlights the space of Ground Zero as being one that highlights rituals of division and conflict: one organisation, *American Atheists*, attempted to have the cross removed as they felt that it violated the separation of church and state. Compare this to the so-called “Ground Zero Mosque,”<sup>117</sup> an Islamic community centre planned for development a few blocks away from the site of the WTC. In the several years following the events of 11<sup>th</sup> September 2001, the community centre made headlines multiple times as various groups campaigned, ultimately successfully, to have it shut down on the grounds that somehow the presence of an Islamic community in the vicinity represented a victory for the terrorists due to a shared religion.

The space of the WTC, creating grounds for the performance of man as God, a modern day tower of babel if we will, became the space of Ground Zero, where the performance of man-against-God or man-against-false-God is played out, an ideological battleground in which identities, as followers of a particular religion, cement their faith as the one true path, casting out all presence of others as some sort of demon.<sup>118</sup>

This intimate space is arguably a factor in Sherman’s philosophy of stage presence. He observes that “the space of performance can appear to radiate from attendants as much as from performers”<sup>119</sup> and that, further, “attendants are never outside spaces of performance for the simple reason that the act of attending gives sense and meaning to performance”<sup>120</sup> as a result of a process through which “it is attending to the action of others in a particular way that constitutes the manifestation of a space for theatrical

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<sup>116</sup> See ‘9/11 Memorials: The Story of the Cross at Ground Zero’, *Washington Post* <[https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/911-memorials-the-story-of-the-cross-at-ground-zero/2011/09/07/gIQA2mMXDK\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/911-memorials-the-story-of-the-cross-at-ground-zero/2011/09/07/gIQA2mMXDK_story.html)> [accessed 28 October 2016] for further information.

<sup>117</sup> See The Awl, ‘The Sad, True Story of the Ground Zero Mosque’, *The Awl*, 2015 <<https://theawl.com/the-sad-true-story-of-the-ground-zero-mosque-dc22bd2c02f>> [accessed 28 October 2016].

<sup>118</sup> This identity-conflict may be seen to manifest in Huntington’s claim that ‘as the world move out of its Western phase, the ideologies which typified late Western civilisation decline, and their place is taken by religions and other culturally based forms of identity and commitment’ in Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), p. 54.

<sup>119</sup> Jon Foley Sherman, *A Strange Proximity: Stage Presence, Failure, and the Ethics of Attention* (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon : New York, NY: Routledge, 2016), p. 65.

<sup>120</sup> Sherman, p. 65.



performance.”<sup>121</sup> In this we find a very interesting idea, as the performance space is no longer delineated to the stage upon which the performers act, but rather stretches to fill the entire area of the theatre, encompassing the observers.

This is perhaps a contentious claim – Alva Noë for instance argues that whilst it is possible to view theatrical presence in a manner such that “audience and performer are together; they share a space and they are both present to each other”<sup>122</sup>. This is generally not the case and consequently “modern theatre denies real presence”<sup>123</sup> so that “actors no longer share a space with an audience; they reside in a symbolic space.”<sup>124</sup> – this would imply that contrary to Sherman’s assertion, attendance does not necessarily create any sort of sense or meaning for the performance. Indeed it may seem that neither of the two models put forward by Noë would agree with Sherman: in the former model the audience are “eyewitnesses to the spectacle”<sup>125</sup> whilst in the latter they “read them, or interpret them, or try to understand the story.”<sup>126</sup>

Whilst Noë implies that the second scenario is in fact a sham, noting that “when something goes wrong and the stagecraft comes undone...we are embarrassed”<sup>127</sup>, which he believes demonstrates that “the theatrical denial of real presence was always just a pretence. We had been averting our gaze the whole time, pretending not to notice the actors’ makeup, or our own forbidden desire to get up and visit the toilets.”<sup>128</sup> This may seem to imply that even in the model in which the audience is apparently a reader/interpreter as opposed to a spectator, there is an actual spectating presence. Is this presence the passive one which the language used may indicate? Surely not, for even in Sherman’s discussion of presence it is not in fact the case that the audience take an active role in the performance. Yet it is by being a spectator that they cause the performance space to be as it is – the performers do not exist in a vacuum irrespective of the audience, but rather the performance exists in part for the onlookers. This is distinct from say the pages of a book (or PhD thesis...) or the performance occurring on a tv show or cinematic film, which exist independent of any theoretical reader (and

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<sup>121</sup> Sherman, p. 65.

<sup>122</sup> Alva Noë, *Varieties of Presence* (Harvard University Press, 2012), p. 5.

<sup>123</sup> Noë, p. 5.

<sup>124</sup> Noë, p. 5.

<sup>125</sup> Noë, p. 5.

<sup>126</sup> Noë, p. 5.

<sup>127</sup> Noë, p. 6.

<sup>128</sup> Noë, p. 6.

indeed this is at the heart of the distinction between the two versions of theatrical presence put forth by Noë.)

Puchner would seem to touch upon this point in his discussion of the Globe Theatre. His analysis of the groundlings as “in the most debased position imaginable”<sup>129</sup>, positioned below the stage whilst both the actors and the more respectable audience members in the stalls tower above them, implies what we might deem an architectural performance (a theme we shall return to in Chapter Four). The overt performance enacted by the professional actors is only a smaller part of the larger ritual taken part in by every person in the immediate area, acting to reinforce social roles and positions within society.

Consider this in light of de Certeau’s city space: the “intertwining, unrecognised poems” here are the interplay between the architectural performance, the performances of the spectators and the performance of the actors on the stage. And yet even as all these things come together, we might say that the possessor of “presence” within the performance is the actor upon the stage. The central ritual amongst rituals is the choreographed play being acted out, and all focus is drawn to its component actors. The other rituals act merely as an aside which bring the main stage, so to speak, into its most extreme focus.

Can we say that this is the case in the space of other performances also? Shifting focus now from theatre to religious ritual we might say that it is also the case: the focus may be upon the priest who carries out the holy rites, but yet there are many rituals orbiting the ritual which enlighten and help to create specific meaning for the spectators who participate at its fringes – the congregation members may choose to sit in their usual pew, to supply their children with a particular sweet in order to keep them concentrating, and so on. The architecture of the venue often likewise adds a layer of performance, drawing attention to the priest, or to the emblems, or away from such things as the case may be, depending upon the architectural and liturgical setting. These rituals combine and intertwine intimately, linking together in a manner which allows for the larger ritual, made up of smaller rituals, to be enacted in its fullest. Even as it becomes a challenge to tell one ritual from another, a level of structural integrity maintained by the focussing presence of the central performer.

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<sup>129</sup> Puchner, ‘The Problem of the Ground’, p. 69.

We may summarise then as follows: whilst a performance may occur within the boundaries of a particular physical place, the act of performing occurs rather in a virtual space which is created from the physical grounds, the main performers, and the performances of the spectators. Space both transcends the physical in order to allow its nature to be dictated not by those things as they actually exist but rather by the context in which they are all performed, and transforms these things into a site-emancipated virtuality. Space in this sense may be seen from now on as synonymous with the word “stage”, a linguistic decision which should be understood within the context of the *theatrum mundi*, the world as stage.

## §2. Action

The concept of action is one which many may more immediately associate with performance: “what is a performance,” they might ask, “but a series of actions choreographed in a particular manner?” Certainly it is tempting to say that most performances can be best discussed and described in terms of the actions that occurred, and analysis may well concentrate on said actions. This is a double-edged sword: on the one hand it may feel as though we are working in familiar territory in which the concepts are all well accepted. On the other, this familiarity may risk falling into the trap of assuming those things we believe we understand as a given. In discussing the role of action in performance, therefore, we must attempt to rid ourselves of any preconceived notion of action, what it is, the role it plays, how it carries out its effects through its role in rituals.

We shall begin with the simple question: what is action? The dictionary tells us that action is “something that is done”<sup>130</sup> or “the process or action of doing something”<sup>131</sup>. Never mind the problems inherent in including a word in its own definition, we find that reducing action to simply “doing something” we are given a definition so broad as to cover nearly everything (a familiar problem by this stage) and so we must work to bring it down to within the confines of our own definition. We have suggested that performance has three elements, of which action is one. Therefore we may say that whilst there may be speech actions, they are not actions. Are we then separating speech

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<sup>130</sup> ‘Action, N.’, *OED Online* (Oxford University Press) <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/1938>> [accessed 15 October 2016].

<sup>131</sup> ‘Action, N.’

from physical actions? We have suggested that space can in some way “act” according to the most basic definition – that the performance space has a role comparable to effect, in the role of the performance upon the participants. The actions of the space, we might say, are physical. We then have two options: we might suggest that space and action are so deeply intertwined that in this section we are merely expanding upon and further illuminating those things which we discussed in the previous section whilst adding in those actions performed by the participants. Alternatively we might suggest that the “action” under consideration here is something else. It is not merely a case of physical action, and indeed it may be something very much other than “doing something” – after all the performance itself does something. It may perhaps help to describe action simply in a negative: it is those areas of performance which are not space or utterance. This however would require clear borders between the elements, something which we may be uncomfortable about declaring (and about which we certainly should be wary).

Thus, instead, we shall begin by attempting to define action as follows: when we say action, we shall refer to those physical actions performed specifically by the participants in the performance, be they the main performers, or the implied audience. Is the inclusion of the audience necessary? We shall begin by rephrasing our terms: the hitherto-called “main performers” shall be deemed the “active participants”, whilst the so-called audience are the “passive participants”. Why are the actions of the passive participants important? On the most basic ground there is a simple action that makes the entire performance of value: the giving of attention to the active participants. If the passive participants choose to look the other way then the magic is broken. Further the reactions of the passive participants can be important – comedy relies on the laughter of the audience, whilst tragedy requires the creation of dramatic tension within the room. Within some rituals the passive participants may be called active for a set length of time (hence the insufficiency of the term): the congregation moving to take the communion elements from the priest, or standing when requested during a baptism in order to affirm their willingness to accept the new member. Although they remain “passive”, for they are not the primary drivers of the performance, still they take on a role in which their actions cannot be discounted as part of the wider ritual. Consider the words of Rancière:

*Viewing is also an action that confirms or transforms this distribution of positions. The spectator also acts, like the pupil or scholar. She observes, selects, compares, interprets. She links what she sees to a*

*host of other things that she has seen on other stages in other kinds of place. She composes her own poem with the elements of the poem before her. She participates in the performance by refashioning it in her own way – by drawing back, for example, from the vital energy that it is supposed to transmit in order to make it a pure image and associate this image with a story which she has read or dreamt, experienced or invented. They are thus both distant spectators and active interpreters of the spectacle offered to them.*<sup>132</sup>

The concept of the “passive participant” as actually passive becomes here even more problematic: if Rancière is to be taken seriously in this claim, then the observer is certainly active in a sense: the “refashioning” being an “active interpretation” such that there is more occurring than simply the “giving attention” which I previously asserted to be of such importance. The claim, it seems, is that attention itself contains an active performance of sorts.

Having now examined who it is that acts we shall ask, what role does this action hold in performance? To answer that “it is what the participants do” is true but unhelpful. It may be that the most reliable way to discuss the subject is to return to that of presence, however Denis Guénoun disagrees in his approach to the matter: declaring that “presence is the naked act of manifesting on stage, *thanks* to the stage”<sup>133</sup> and that further, “presence is what is left of the event of the stage when the actor’s delivery to the audience is retracted or withheld”.<sup>134</sup> We might say that in fact we are misunderstanding, that presence is in fact a fourth factor not yet considered. Guénoun would have us believe that “presence and action [are] a heterogeneous team”<sup>135</sup> and that “it is easy to see what constitutes their difference.”<sup>136</sup> He elucidates that presence is linked to being, whilst action is linked to acting, but that “there is often a tendency – or temptation- to equate the two terms [acting and being]”<sup>137</sup> – if this mistake is truly one then it is one that we are making. Is it a mistake? To Guénoun, “considering action as

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<sup>132</sup> Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator* (London: Verso, 2009), p. 13.

<sup>133</sup> Denis Guénoun, ‘Face and the Profile’, in *Encounters in Performance Philosophy: Theatre, Performativity and the Practice of Theory*, ed. by Laura Cull and Alice Lagaay (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp. 93–94.

<sup>134</sup> Guénoun, p. 94.

<sup>135</sup> Guénoun, p. 96.

<sup>136</sup> Guénoun, p. 96.

<sup>137</sup> Guénoun, p. 96.

presence...or presence as action... is to deconstitute the stage itself, to reduce its status to that of a display stand or an altar".<sup>138</sup> But why should we not reduce it so?

In our previous discussion of space we have implied perhaps that the "stage", or the space in which the performance occurs is just that. We may try to argue in fact that, like the display stand, the stage vanishes into the background when action occurs upon it, allowing the performance to be foregrounded whilst the space merely is. In this sense, action and presence must be intertwined as it would seem to be presence which allows the space to become integrated and out of sight – becoming in Heideggerian terms ready-to-hand<sup>139</sup> as a part of the performance.

We might then choose to discuss action as follows: where Space is the background of the performance, the area that is created, that which comes first in the performance, action is the immediate performance as it is most obviously observed; it is that which is contingent upon the space. Despite its contingency, action is of central importance to performance. It is within action that the power of the ritual to effect change or reinforce identity is found: we shall say that the ritual is composed largely of actions, behaviours, things that are done in a certain manner, and that their being carried out in certain circumstances (that is, on the ritual's stage) is what gives them their power.

Does this seem a stretch? Consider that in the previous chapter our attempts to define performance largely included the word "action": performances are largely actions, occurring in space, and including speech. Let us consider also that we have previously discussed the moods in which rituals occur in our previous chapter. Mood must then take a central role within our understanding of action: focussing on the simplest observation that we have previously made, we shall say that actions in performance are either playful or unplayful. Let us say that to some strange extent one defining difference between the two may be that play empowers action: the action performed in an unplayful manner is stale. It insists on following the prescribed form and manner of the existing ritual. It is *reinforcing action*, whereas the playful action is otherwise. It departs from the prescribed in order to allow a different, new, perhaps less reverential

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<sup>138</sup> Guénoun, p. 96.

<sup>139</sup> 'The less we just stare at the hammer-Thing, and the more we sieze hold of it and use it, the more primordial does our relationship to it become...that with which we concern ourselves primarily is the work... [which] bears with it that referential totality within which the equipment is encountered' Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), pp. 98–99.

perspective. It may allow for what Hobsbawm refers to as *invented traditions*: “a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past.”<sup>140</sup> These *defining actions* break out of the existing ritual to create new rituals *in potentia*: although the ritual may not take a hold and become permanently repeated in reinforcing actions: a subset will be the *questioning actions* which we have previously discussed as *dark play* and which may never again be repeated if the answer that comes back is “no, this is not who I am”.

Does the defining action have other subsets? Consider the action which alters the manner in which the existing ritual is conducted without overtly moving beyond it to the point of inventing something wholly new – we might call this the *expanding action*, as it expands the ritual into new territories. There is also the question of the action which intentionally subverts the existing ritual in order to say, in a sense, “this is no longer who I am” – we may see it as the *rejecting action*, and this may be seen as the polar opposite of the reinforcing action.

### §3. Utterance

An understanding of utterance must begin with JL Austin and his work on speech act theory (see Chapter One). To Austin, performatives are initially confined to those utterances which form speech acts, creating a dichotomy of performative and constative utterances – that is speech acts, and statements of proposition. However he later moves on from this position, noting that statements can carry the risk of being proven false or invalid as performatives and that “once we realise that what we have to study is *not* the sentence but the issuing of an utterance in a speech situation, there can hardly be any longer a possibility of not seeing that stating is performing an act.”<sup>141</sup> Austin, it seems then, is moving speech act from *performative utterance* to any spoken utterance. If we are to follow in this vein then the role of utterance in our model would seem to follow an obvious structure: we would simply seek to explore the utterances used in rituals, the manner in which the sentences uttered serve as speech acts and the role that those acts serve in enforcing identity, their effect on the ritual, and so on.

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<sup>140</sup> *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. by Eric J. Hobsbawm and Terence O. Ranger, Canto, 19th pr (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Pr, 2010), p. 1.

<sup>141</sup> J. L. Austin, *How To Do Things With Words* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), p. 138.

I would suggest, however, that this approach would be a mistake, and that rather it is necessary to explore more fully the nature of utterance. This is for several reasons: firstly, this approach to utterance risks concentrating on speech, and yet language is not speech but is rather a separate category with which it has some overlap. Language can in fact exist in non-spoken forms: it may for instance be written or, escaping from the boundaries entirely of a word-based approach, actions may also be a form of language. Secondly, as our interest in performance is in presence, we may find that our interest in speech is not in the words said, but rather on factors relating to *how* they are said: inflection, volume, speed, and so on. Thirdly, both of these factors highlight the issue that our focus is on something which is related to but is neither speech nor volume. To utter is generally accepted to be a vocalisation, but the word stems from the Middle Dutch *ūteren*, meaning to make known. Taking the term utterance to refer to a making known is useful as it allows us to extend the concept to a wider field: to communications through various means: spoken, written, drawn, signed.<sup>142</sup> Compare the utterance in general to the very specific concept of the proposition, which as we have seen Austin gives consideration to in the development of his concept of speech acts. In making known, the utterance acts similarly to the proposition in that it communicates an idea which may have a truth value. However, unlike the proposition, this truth value does not come from a direct correlation between what is stated and the facts of reality, but rather it is a value which is created through the ritual being performed: utterance is the making known of that which the ritual states and, further, the utterance is performative - it may be said to not only state the concept, but to play a role in creating the related truth value.

At this stage I will address an issue arising from Judith Butler's important body of work. In her 1997 text on the subject of hate speech and censorship, *Excitable Speech*, Butler declares that "when we claim to have been injured by language...we ascribe an

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<sup>142</sup> Compare Wittgenstein's observation that 'We don't want to refine or complete the system of rules for the use of our words in unheard-of [unerhörter] ways .... The real discovery is the one that enables me to break off philosophising when I want to. – The one that gives philosophy peace, so that it is no longer tormented by questions which bring itself in question. – Instead, a method is now demonstrated by examples, and the series of examples can be broken off. – Problems are solved (difficulties eliminated), not a single problem. There is not a single philosophical method, though there are indeed methods, different therapies, as it were' in Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. by G. E. M. Anscombe, P. M. S. Hacker, and Joachim Schulte, Rev. 4th ed (Chichester, West Sussex, U.K. ; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), pp. 56–57.



agency to language, a power to injure, and position ourselves as the objects of its injurious trajectory.”<sup>143</sup> This is a continuation of the simple claim that utterance “does something” – in this case causes injury of some sort. Indeed, Butler is keen to explain that she is writing within the context of Austin’s theories, as well as Althusser’s concept of *interpellation*. In other writing she expands beyond the realm of speech, noting that “performativity is not just about speech acts. It is about bodily acts.”<sup>144</sup> She expands on this further with the assertion that “we say something, and mean something by what we say, but we also do something with our speech, and what we do, how we act upon another language, is not the same as the meaning we consciously convey.”<sup>145</sup> The reference to bodily acts as performatives in this case is also interesting, as it implies that our behaviours act as a form of performance which causes something to be done: an imparting of meaning, just as that which is put forth by speech. If we are to take this stance seriously, then we might run into a potential pitfall: that any distinction between action and utterance is at risk of being blurred. If actions are performatives then are they not simply a form of utterance? The solution can be found in the understanding that, as Vicki Kirby notes, “[Butler’s] understanding of ‘language’ [is] arguably the key to her entire oeuvre.”<sup>146</sup> This is clarified by noting that, according to Butler “language and representation are fluid structures whose internal complexities allow different outcomes and possibilities...language and culture are mutually implicated – indeed, some would say they are one and the same.”<sup>147</sup>

This conflation of language and culture can perhaps be seen to resonate with Heidegger’s concerns discussed in the previous chapter regarding the difficulties of applying concepts from one language/culture within another. More immediately, this proposed equivalence between culture and language again moves performativity outside of the realm of “mere” speech, recognising that speech is simply one manner in which language manifests. As shall be discussed in more detail in the following chapter, Butler is perhaps most famous for her claims about the performative nature of gender, in which her view of bodily acts as being performative is extended such as to claim that the concept of gender is one which is constituted through the carrying out of particular “gendered” behaviours – that is to say an individual is recognised as a particular gender

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<sup>143</sup> Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 1.

<sup>144</sup> Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York ; London: Routledge, 2004), p. 198.

<sup>145</sup> Butler, *Undoing Gender*, p. 199.

<sup>146</sup> Kirby, p. 45.

<sup>147</sup> Kirby, p. 68.

not through purely biological facets but rather through their conformity to those performative behaviours which constitute the gender they present. Can we thus view gender as language, in some sense? Certainly if gender is understood to be a particular collection of performatives then this would seem to make sense. Further that gender roles and expectations may vary by culture would seem to support the previously discussed conflation of gender and language. These issues will be returned to in the following chapter.

Several questions will arise as we ask what place utterance has in our framework: as space gives the display case for the action of the performance, what of utterance? Does utterance provide a backup to the action in our analogy, a spotlight which causes an enlightening and emphasising? Does it sit upon the stage alongside action? A possibility that presents itself is that we are mistaken in our creating such a barrier and that utterance may be seen as a subset of action. However I suggest that even if this were the case it is still important enough an action to uniquely require its own separate analysis. We shall say that yes, utterance is a thing which occurs upon the stage alongside action. And yet the manner in which it does so is different: utterance is a making known. What is made known? The meaning of the action. More specifically, utterance makes known the meaning of a specific subset of actions. We have implied previously that the actions of the passive performers still have value in their creation of the space, however utterance comes after space and has no such role. Rather, utterance is in the domain only of the active performers: it is itself highly active and its existence in the passive sphere serves only to disrupt the space and damage the ritual (consider the wrath that befalls those who answer their phone in the theatre audience.) The utterance of the ritual is often paradoxically both the most set within stone and the most open for the influence of play: in many examples of rituals we see the exact wording will be previously written down and prepared, to be taught to the participants in order to allow for a conformity of experience<sup>148</sup>.

Even in the rituals of everyday life particular language and words will be required, for the self-evident point that the ritual is intended to reinforce a specific identity, and if the language of the ritual did not relate directly to the identity being reinforced, then the ritual would be failing to do its job. Despite this, the area for play and improvisation is

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<sup>148</sup> For example the liturgy books used in some religious services, or in a more humorous and secular vein the availability of scripts for “audience participation” at screenings of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*

ripe. One might modulate the delivery of the language, to put a different emphasis on particular areas of the ritual, to question or state the relative importance of column A to column B, to subversively reject a factor of an identity by presenting it in a way that implies mockery, satire, cynicism. If space gives action a stage then utterance grants it context, an explanation, an addition of the proposition to the action.

We shall say then that for our purposes *utterance* may be understood as follows: it is a communicative gesture, either verbal or non-verbal, which serves to complement the action occurring on the stage in order to communicate, or make known, the meaning the action carries for the active performer's identity. In doing so the utterance acts partly as a proposition, in that it attaches to the action a concept (in this case "this is a facet of the performer's identity") which contains a truth value ("this is/is not a facet"), but also acts unlike the proposition in that it is performative, causing the statement to be made true or false in the moment of utterance and so helping to enact the ontical effect of the ritual.

It may be asked, "in what sense is action distinct from utterance?" after all, it may seem that utterance is simply a sub-category of action (the performative in Austin's formulation is after all a speech act). The question that is central here is whether, if utterance is a form of action, it is a form which can be viewed as distinct enough to be given its own category. I contend that it is: that if utterance is an action, then its role is different to that of non-utterant action. Thus for the sake of this discussion it is valuable to keep an action/utterance distinction.

We have suggested that utterances may be verbal or non-verbal. There is another, more subtle category that is not considered therein: sign languages may be seen as gestures which are verbal (inasmuch as they are expressing "words", and indeed often verbs) but which are non-spoken, at least in the sense that such a concept is understood by hearing people.

In Nicolas Philbert's 1992 film *Le Pays des sourds* (released in English as "In the Land of the Deaf") we are given an insight into the culture of France's deaf community. Before the film even begins, the introduction by the director included on the DVD offers us an insight into exactly why this subject might be relevant to this discussion when he declares that "with sign language you could say that deaf people have their

own...universal culture. Even if their language is different deaf people from different countries can understand each other very quickly, much faster than us.”<sup>149</sup> We must be careful when approaching such a discussion: in discussing D/deaf<sup>150</sup> culture as different to the culture of hearing people, we should not allow the language of us and them to result in a thinking of deaf people as “the Other”. The opening minute of the film presents us with a group signed performance, fast-paced synchronised signing, reading from sheet music. Whilst there are no subtitles and so the meaning is inaccessible to those who do not speak French Sign Language (FSL), one can recognise the hallmarks of a sung performance: there is an obvious rhythm, there is cadence, at some points there is even harmony. What is missing, however, is a musical accompaniment: the film is not silent, for the director has not removed the background noise, but the performance itself lacks sound<sup>151</sup>.

Let us consider what this tells us about language: although there are no words involved in the performance there is still language, indeed FSL is as much a language as French or English. The signs are just as much symbolic of particular concepts as collections of spoken words are. It is however a very different language: although it has grammar, it lacks concepts of tone and inflection in the way that a hearing person would understand them. When JL Austin published his book on performativity he entitled it *How to Do Things With Words*. Might we suggest that, paraphrasing Wittgenstein, the limits of Austin’s language are the limits of his philosophy? Signed languages may allow utterance that is performative and yet does things not through words but through a movement of the hand, a facial expression, sometimes perhaps a mouthing of a word even if the word itself is missing. A further point of interest that arises from the film is this: for viewers who are unfamiliar with FSL, much of the film is incomprehensible due to a lack of any sort of translation. Further for the non-French speaker, subtitles must be relied upon for sections in which voice is used. We are thus receiving not the spoken message itself but rather a translation. In some sections there is signed monologue to the camera, and this does have subtitles, but the nature of the subtitles is not indicated - are we being given a direct interpretation, or is it an English translation

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<sup>149</sup> Nicolas Philbert, *Le Pays des sourds* (Second Run DVD, 1992).

<sup>150</sup> A discussion of the D/deaf distinction can be found at Caroline O’Neill, ‘D or D? Who’s Deaf and Who’s Deaf?’, 2003 <[http://www.bbc.co.uk/ouch/opinion/d\\_or\\_d\\_whos\\_deaf\\_and\\_whos\\_deaf.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/ouch/opinion/d_or_d_whos_deaf_and_whos_deaf.shtml)>.

<sup>151</sup> A similar scene occurs in the opening minute of *Code inconnu*(2000), when we are presented with video of a young girl pressing fearfully against a wall in what is soon revealed to be a game of charades played by D/deaf children. Similarly to *Le pays de sourds* there is no non-diegetic sound. In a noticeable difference, however, subtitles are supplied and thus the language barrier is removed.

of original French subtitles, a translation of an interpretation? This distinction should be given due consideration, as translation/interpretation might be seen itself as utterance.

To translate/interpret is, on one level, to mediate. To act as a transfer mechanism of information between two parties, ensuring that each receives the other's message in a form that they understand. We might also say however that it has a strongly performative aspect: to interpret/translate is to give meaning: the receiving party experiences what would to them otherwise be meaningless gibberish, now become a meaningful message. Further an interpretation is not a direct translation of meaning. This may seem obvious if we consider it – a person born deaf will not have a language which is full of idiom dependant on the sensual experience that a person born hearing will be familiar with. The interpreter must take this into account when acting as a medium between the two. Further the interpreter must behave in a manner which causes them to become a natural part of the communication – as the medium of understanding, they must attempt to be, whilst not invisible, also not an obvious artificial aid added to the conversation which would highlight the otherness of the participants to one another.

Can the interpreter's utterances make statements beyond giving meaning to words? Consider the case of Thamsanqa Jantjie, the sign language interpreter at the funeral of Nelson Mandela in 2013, who in what he would later claim to be an attack of schizophrenia did not give an interpretation of the speeches made, but rather waved his hands around in a meaningless manner. As Slavoj Žižek observes, "Jantjie's performance was not meaningless – precisely because it delivered no particular meaning (the gestures were meaningless), it directly rendered meaning as such – the pretence of meaning. Those of us who hear well and do not understand sign language assumed that his gestures had meaning, although we were not able to understand them."<sup>152</sup> To Žižek the performance is clear: Jantjie utters that the hearing audience has little compassion or interest in the D/deaf audience, that rather the role of the interpreter at these occasions is to allow the hearing audience to believe that something is being done and so to uphold a pretence of compassion. Although his hand waves have no actual meaning, for the hearing audience they utter the words that are allegedly being interpreted. For the deaf audience they utter, "you are not important."

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<sup>152</sup> 'The "fake" Mandela Memorial Interpreter Said It All', *The Guardian*, 16 December 2013, section Opinion <<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/dec/16/fake-mandela-memorial-interpreter-schizophrenia-signing>> [accessed 20 January 2017].

In a sense the first of these utterances is implicit in all interpretation: when a speaker sees the interpreter speak to the receiver, there is an implicit message. The ritual of interpretation not only tells the receiver what the speaker is trying to communicate, but tells the speaker that the apparent gibberish passing from interpreter to receiver contains the meaning that they have just spoken. It should of course be noted that such a situation should be condemned: for the deaf person, being told they are unimportant is incredibly offensive, reinforcing the concept that they are unwelcome in an auralnormative society. Thus the dual ritual occurring is one which both insults and belittles the apparent audience whilst making the actual audience, that is those who do not require interpretation, feel that inclusivity is being achieved.

#### §4. Demonstration

In *The Human Condition*, Hannah Arendt discusses a concept she refers to as the *space of appearance*, which “comes into being whenever men are together in the manner of speech and action, and therefore pre-dates and precedes all formal constitution of the public realm”<sup>153</sup> and which “does not survive the actuality of the movement which brought it into being”<sup>154</sup>. When we refer back to our earlier discussion of space we may well begin to see a similarity with the space which Arendt is describing: one in which “I appear to others as others appear to me, where men exist not merely like other living or inanimate things but make their appearance explicitly”<sup>155</sup>. True, Arendt’s space is nuanced in that it exists largely within a political context: her space of appearance is one which is created solely for the purpose of the bringing together of the *polis* as a political unit, but nonetheless we may see this space to be a subset of the space we have discussed: it is arguably site-emancipated, as its coming-into-being occurs *whenever* the correct circumstances are there, yet it *precedes* formal constitution. Further, Arendt appears to associate the space of appearance with the *public realm*, that is to say the political sphere of society as opposed to the individual’s private life, going so far as to specifically declare the public realm to be “the potential space of appearance between acting and speaking men.”<sup>156</sup> That the activities of the men in the public sphere are those of acting and speaking will immediately jump to our attention.

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<sup>153</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2nd ed (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 199.

<sup>154</sup> Arendt, p. 199.

<sup>155</sup> Arendt, pp. 198–99.

<sup>156</sup> Arendt, p. 200.

We shall now take Arendt's drawing of attention to this factor to attempt to demonstrate the workings of the elements of performance through the example of the public realm.

Our first factor is space. The space, we have said, is site-emancipated in that it does not have an attachment to the physical space in which it exists but rather represents in some way the foundations of the public realm's constitution – the public realm itself being decidedly non-corporeal, we should feel comfortable saying that the space is virtual. This virtual, temporary space brings together various factors: the organisation together of the polis, as well as the land that they occupy and over which the polis implicitly claims ownership, and acts as a stage on which the rituals which shall follow will occur. Now enter the factors of action and speech, subtly different and yet acting in harmony to bring about the actual power of the ritual.

Arendt discusses these two factors in a similar manner to our own observations: “through [speech and action] men distinguish themselves instead of being merely distinct; they are the modes in which human beings appear to each other, not indeed as physical objects, but *qua* men.”<sup>157</sup> Actions are the doings of all the participants in the ritual, occurring within the space of appearance which creates the public realm through cementing themselves both as individuals and, crucially, through a shared identity as a part of the polis. Through their actions a polis is formed and created, whilst the activity of speech allows this to be emphasised and reinforced. If the activity says “we are the polis”, through speech members of the polis take an active role upon the stage that is the space of appearance, drawing attention to themselves both to clearly say “I should be acknowledged as a part, and as an individual”, but to shape the ritual which says “this is what the polis is, what it does, how it does or should function.”

Consider as a practical example the political revolution. In July 1776, delegates of the British colonies in North America gathered together in the Philadelphia colonial legislature building to discuss a way to prevent the furtherance of hostilities which had broken out between the people and the King's army, a performance occurred which resulted in an incredibly significant ontic effect: the transformation of the colonies into an entirely new country independent of its former government. The space in which the Second Continental Congress operated was created by the bringing together of various

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<sup>157</sup> Arendt, p. 176.

factors: the delegates, the official status as a seat of local government held by the building in which they met, the context of the meeting. We might then claim that the ultimate drafting of the Declaration of Independence and its signing by the delegates was an action whose ritual created a new identity for the participants: an identity as citizens of the newly formed United States of America, but also an identity as traitors to the government of the lands that formed their new nation.

Under this model, the words exchanged in the discussions and debates leading to the drafting and signing of the document would serve to reinforce and emphasise these new identities, the reasons to create them and the strength of the belief in said identities. This may, however, be too simplistic. In his short talk *Declarations of Independence*, Derrida discusses the act of the signing of the declaration, focussing on the question of “who signs, and with what so-called proper name, the declarative act which founds an institution?”<sup>158</sup> Derrida begins this analysis with an explanation of the perceived relationship between the text and its signatory:

*The declaration which founds an institution, a constitution or a State requires that a signer engage him- or herself. The signature maintains a link with the instituting act as an act of language and of writing, a link which has absolutely nothing of the empirical accident about it.*<sup>159</sup>

If this is correct, then the signing of the declaration is itself an integral part of the action of the declaration. This claim would seem so far obvious and uncontroversial in regards to the previous claim that the drafting and signing was a ritualistic action. However in examining the implications of his wider question Derrida draws upon more subtle nuances than have originally been considered. It is of course tempting to say that the signatories of the declaration are those persons whose names are written at the bottom – the literal signatories. This is not Derrida’s immediate thought, however, rather he first notes that Jefferson, the writer of the declaration, is not the signer (and indeed “no-one would take him for the true signer”<sup>160</sup>) as “he was not responsible for *writing*, in the productive or initiating sense of the term, only for *drawing up*, as one says of a secretary that he or she draws up a letter of which the spirit has been breathed into him

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<sup>158</sup> Jacques Derrida, ‘Declarations of Independence’, *New Political Science*, 1986, 7–15 (p. 8).

<sup>159</sup> Derrida, p. 8.

<sup>160</sup> Derrida, p. 8.



or her, or even the content dictated.”<sup>161</sup> The representatives may, as I have said, seem the obvious choice however, but Derrida disagrees, as “they sign for themselves but also “for” others”<sup>162</sup> – they are representatives and sign on behalf of the people of America. As such “by right, the signer is thus the people, the “good” people.”<sup>163</sup>

At this point an interesting problem is raised: Derrida notes that it is unclear whether the signing of independence acts to free the good people, or whether it is simply stating that they have already freed themselves.<sup>164</sup> The question is thus raised as to the nature of the performative action – does it change an ontic status or merely recognise one?<sup>165</sup> He argues however that this lack of clarity “is not a question of a difficult analysis which would fail in the face of the structure of the acts involved and the overdetermined temporality of the events. This obscurity, this undecidability between, let’s say, a performative structure and a constative structure, is *required* in order to produce the sought-after effect.”<sup>166</sup> This effect is of importance, says Derrida, because “this people does not exist. They do not exist as an entity, it does not exist, before this declaration, not as such”<sup>167</sup>. And as such “the signature invents the signer”<sup>168</sup>. The signing on behalf of a people who did not exist until the signing highlights then the unusual nature of the performative utterance: that its effectiveness comes not from some actual discernible and empirical source but rather from a level of common consent, with its effects being based upon agreement that those are the effects. Derrida introduces also a countersignature to the signing by “the good people” who did not exist until they signed: he notes that the declaration of independence appeals to the laws of nature and nature’s god, and to the supreme judge of the universe. Thus, “for this declaration to have a meaning and an effect, there must be a last instance. God is the name, the best one, for this instance and this ultimate signature.”<sup>169</sup> The implication to be drawn here, I propose, is that such a major ritual as the creation of a State occurs by necessity within a context which assumes, whether overtly or implicitly, a God entity which grants the

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<sup>161</sup> Derrida, pp. 8–9.

<sup>162</sup> Derrida, p. 9.

<sup>163</sup> Derrida, p. 9.

<sup>164</sup> A third option is of course that it merely specified an *intention* towards freedom – that no actual status change came about until its legitimacy was recognised by Britain. This however would go against the intention of the Declaration and so shall be disregarded.

<sup>165</sup> There is an echo here of the question concerning concepts of “rights” found in many constitutions, human rights declarations, and so on – are the documents recognising the existence of pre-existing rights, or are they causing them to be granted?

<sup>166</sup> Derrida, p. 9.

<sup>167</sup> Derrida, p. 10.

<sup>168</sup> Derrida, p. 10.

<sup>169</sup> Derrida, p. 12.

authority for the ritual to take place – indeed the a-temporality of God protects from the paradox of the a-temporal relation between the signer and the declaration which grants the signer his or her authority. Returning to the original discussion of the signing of the Declaration as one which created an identity, we now find ourselves admitting that it is more subtle: that the ritual was one which reinforced and defined identities, but that the actual creation was one which occurs in an a-temporal common consent. We are however justified in continuing on the claim that the signing of the Declaration *did* cause to come into being a new relationship between the people of America and the British rulers.

In chapter 1 ¶6 I discussed briefly the relation between performer and audience in the *Theatrum Mundi* and its implications more generally within ritual. Let us now return to this subject in light of our examination of performance's elements. Dan Rebellato in his essay "When We Talk of Horses" offers a useful place for exploration when he states an "interest...in trying to understand...what it is we do when we watch a play."<sup>170</sup> His essay is not immediately apparent as readily applicable: he asserts that his scope "is representational theatre, by which [is meant] the sort of event in which people and things on stage represent other people and things"<sup>171</sup> and that his examples used will largely be plays, although his "comments may well have much wider application."<sup>172</sup> This wider application will be of importance as, whilst our study is of ritual and does not occur generally on a stage in a theatrical sense, it is certainly representational: the participants and their actions may be said to represent other things in some sense if not in a directly theatrical manner still in that they point to larger issues of identity and so on.

Rebellato's interest is in "the relation between stage and fiction"<sup>173</sup> and suggests that the key to this relation can be found in metaphor: "actors give performances that become metaphors for the characters, the stage becomes a metaphor for indeterminate imaginary worlds or determinate real ones."<sup>174</sup> Key to this concept is that the performance presents

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<sup>170</sup> Dan Rebellato, 'When We Talk of Horses: Or, What Do We See When We See a Play?', *Performance Research*, 14.1 (2009), 17–28 (p. 18) <<https://doi.org/10.1080/13528160903113155>>.

<sup>171</sup> Rebellato, p. 18.

<sup>172</sup> Rebellato, p. 18.

<sup>173</sup> Rebellato, p. 24.

<sup>174</sup> Rebellato, p. 27.

to the audience a representation of ideas, or of concepts, which are distinct from the things which act as the representation. Noë touches on this when he remarks on the Eucharist: “does the wine symbolise blood? Or is it blood? Are you believers? Or are you actors? There is always leakage between these different stances.”<sup>175</sup> With Rebellato we may ask whether to say “the wine is blood” is best understood as a literal statement or in some metaphoric manner? Likewise can referring to the believers as actors also be a metaphor?

## Conclusion

In the preceding paragraphs we explored the way space, action, and speech come together to allow rituals to be performed. *Space* was seen to be both separated from physical place, in the same manner as the stage traditionally emancipates itself from the ground upon which it was built, and paradoxically also linked to the site which it transforms from physical to virtual. We have seen that space is intertwined with presence, bringing together both active and passive participants alongside the physical grounds which they inhabit. Crucially it was seen that space, rather than being composed of these things per se, is defined by the context in which they come together and interact. In doing so it acts as the “stage” of the ritual, a display upon which the action and speech occur.

Action meanwhile was seen to relate specifically to the participants in the performance, be they active or passive. Dependent upon the mood of the performer and the context in which the action is formed these actions may be one of several categories: questioning, defining, rejecting, or reinforcing. This can be seen to strongly relate back to our discussion in the previous chapter of different types of ritual and can be seen as the main active force of the rituals. Finally, speech was seen as the domain of only the active participants. It acts to cement the context of the actions performed by these participants, and whilst separated from language still is seen to have overlap. Like action, speech was seen to have the potential for subversion through the imposing of a playful or unplayful mood.

The thread of presence runs through all three elements: space we may say is made to comprise the physical objects of the ritual, and to set a context in which presence exists.

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<sup>175</sup> Noë, p. 6.

Action meanwhile is the manner in which the participants cause presence to radiate from themselves, thus helping to create and preserve the ritual space. Finally, we may say that it is through speech that the active participants are able to focus the presence specifically upon themselves. In our fourth section we saw how these elements may be seen to come together in the context of the bringing together of the polis in a newly defined public space. It is this element of presence which gives the actions discussed (the discussion of options, the drafting of the founding document, its signing by the congress) their power as ritual, causing them to change from being merely a set of actions which a set of people carried out, to rather a living and breathing event, a performance, a ritual which created a new identity.

In the previous chapter we discussed the concept of the *theatrum mundi*, which I have already determined to be the “space” of the performance which this thesis focuses upon. Such a declaration may now require re-visiting in light of the analysis of performance’s elements. If the *theatrum mundi* is the space of performance, then it would seem to be synonymous with the *public space*, but the reality is less simple. The space that we have discussed is one which is given its legitimacy through the combination of space, action, utterance, and presence. Further it would seem that in this analysis a space is intrinsic to the performance that is ongoing. The *theatrum mundi*, however, was previously said to be a metaphor which “describe[s] the human condition of existing and acting in the world”. The *theatrum mundi* is more than simply the space of the performance, but rather it is an all-encompassing environment which encompasses all possible spaces. It is the *theatrum mundi* acting as *co-opticon* which allows for the transformation of any given place into performative space.

As we now reach the end of the first division of this thesis, the tone shifts from one of analysis to one of application. Having explained what is meant by performance, what that performance consists of in its theoretical state, and the individual elements which contribute to it, we will next ask the question of what these performances look like in the world, by concentrating on several notable examples.

Division II

### Chapter Three: Re-enactment: Culture, Politics, Academia

In the previous chapters I discussed key concepts of performance, ritual, and performativity. In this chapter, I will examine the concept of “re-enactment”. The first step in this will be an examination of the role played by myth and ritual in public life and identity. This will be carried out initially by examining specific examples of such rituals. In §1 I will explore exactly what is meant by re-enactment, its link to and purpose within the performances which previous chapters have established as our focus and so on (§1). I will then examine this model as it is seen in one of the most literal forms (§2): the practice of historical-re-enactment, in which participants attempt to replicate historical practices or events for both educational and entertainment uses. This re-enactment will be seen to involve an element of what we might call “practiced myth”, or re-clamation of a fictional history. In focussing in on the practices in particular of American Civil War Re-Enactment we shall see the ways in which this reclamation can be highly politically charged, an issue which will be further seen through an examining of broader related performances (§3).

Recognising the role of politics in re-enactment, §2 will show a second angle, which is the role of re-enactment in politics. I will examine the role of the political debate, focussing on the American Presidential debate which I propose in its modern form can be viewed as quadrennial re-enactment of an original debate held between Kennedy and Nixon (§4 and §5), before examining specifically the fascinating rituals that occurred in the most recent US election, of 2016, one, which in the eyes of many, led to an unprecedented and unexpected result, and yet within which we can see the continuation of many of the basic principles under discussion (§6). Finally my focus in §3 will be turned inward to academia. It will be shown that threads found in the previous two sections extend also to this area, and further that elements which are evident in academia may also cast their shadow back. In taking these three together we shall see an establishment of re-enactment as being one of the primary and major expressions of performance within the *theatrum mundi*.

It would seem to be a relatively uncontroversial claim that every people group has its myths – most often they will be thought of in terms of religious folklore and stories:

origin myths detailing the creation of the world, for instance<sup>176</sup>. Indeed a supernatural element may well be considered an essential portion of myth even in those stories which appear to predominantly cover the acts of humans – consider the epic Greek myths attributed to Homer in which an active role is played by the gods in events which may have in fact happened in some manner<sup>177</sup>. It is undoubtedly still uncontroversial to describe these myths as having value of some form in the creation of an identity for that people group: for a quintessential example we need simply look at the tale of Moses and the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt, and its centralised importance within the modern Jewish calendar, likewise the stories of Esther, Judas Maccabeus, and others. Following on from the given examples it is trivial to observe that rituals are often used to assist in the continuance of these myths and their place in reinforcing identity: the performed myth so to speak.

There is another meaning of myth, however, perhaps with less overtly religious significance, which we use to refer to a particular popular cultural representation of an individual or event which may be said to “whitewash” the manner in which they or it is perceived – we may talk of “the myth of Churchill” as a great leader and statesman, ignoring the flaws and troubles in his political career, or the “myth of the great war”, in which the events of 1914-1918 are presented in a particularly over-glorified and patriotic light. Over the course of this chapter I will examine the manner in which these two concepts of myth are closely intertwined, the (mis)representation of a situation or person and the performed “rituals” which allow the narrative of the myth to shape identities. I shall begin with what may seem a clear cut example: the re-enactment of history performed by amateur historians, concentrating primarily on the United States Civil War. This “historical re-enactment” will be seen to be a more overt example of everyday rituals, which following Girard’s thesis that rituals re-enacting an original event, may be claimed to be themselves re-enactments of a sort. From there I shall discuss the re-enactment found in the American political campaign process in the age of the mass media, and then the role of re-enactment within academia.

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<sup>176</sup> We should perhaps at this point be careful to note that our usage of the word “myth” is not intended to suggest a judgment on the factual basis of any such stories: there are still those who would consider such tales to have their basis in fact, whether partially or in their entirety, and no disrespect to those beliefs is intended.

<sup>177</sup> As no authoritative source exists to confirm the truth or falsehood of, for example, the Trojan war, it may well be of value to consider such texts within a context of “historic fiction”, allowing for at least a basis in truth.

The question may be asked at this point, why choose these specific examples? On an initial glance it may seem that historical re-enactment, presidential election campaigning, and the so-called academic ‘Ivory Tower’ have little in common with which to create a connecting narrative. Is this the case however? Consider for instance that both the historical re-enactments on which this chapter largely focuses (those relating to the American Civil War) and many areas of academia are overtly political: the former explores the relation between American citizens and historical figures who attempted to abandon that same citizenship, whilst academia could be said to be at its heart political both in the obvious sense of competing theories and ideas, relations between the education and government sectors and so on, and in the sense of an ongoing dialogue. Indeed the latter concept, of dialogue, may be that which links all these things. As such we see in this analysis a definite progression: we begin with that which is political but which is also re-enactment at its most literal, move through the most literal politics which is also re-enactment, and finally reach academia which is both re-enactment and politics in their less overt forms and which will act as the final set-up for chapter IV, in which we shall apply the theoretical framework thus far developed to one final and very specific area within academia: philosophy.

As political issues go there is one which risks overshadowing the analysis to follow. The American Civil War was an event intrinsically linked to the institution of slavery, a practice which is rightly looked on with distaste in the modern day. There may be a tendency to think that in re-enacting the activities of those involved in the actions of the Confederacy there is an extent of “honouring” or “endorsing” the historic slaveholders, and as shall be seen the activities of some of the more loyal descendants of the Confederates veer directly into the territory of apologetics and outright misrepresentation into a more positive light of the more horrific atrocities of the time. So that despite these activities being overtly political, and indeed because they are political in rather a distasteful manner, it is important that this analysis attempts, as far as is reasonable, to be an apolitical and non-judgmental one in order to avoid obscuring the points that are of greatest interest to this analysis.

As shall be seen the culture around the Civil War results in various re-enactments and rituals which allow for the creation of a cultural identity based around a mythologised view of the past. As such what is most interesting is not the nature or detail of either that past or its relation to the real past on which it is based, but rather the manner in



which these myths and rituals form, and most crucially the manner in which they act to reinforce a sense of identity, as discussed in chapter I. Indeed, one crucial point which should draw us towards these things is that mythologizing of a past. This is especially the case insofar as this past is one which, compared to many founding myths, is a relatively recent one and further is heavily documented to an extent that we can view the myths precisely alongside their origin in a way we cannot for, say, the Trojan War.

### **§1 Re-enactment**

As discussed briefly in chapter I, René Girard claims that ritual is re-enacted violence. More specifically he claims that, “the objective of ritual is the proper re-enactment of surrogate-victim mechanism; its function is to perpetrate or renew the effects of this mechanism; that is, to keep violence outside the community.”<sup>178</sup> In other words the ritual in Girard’s view is one which keeps the community safe from the taint of violence through the transference of the entire community’s violent urges or need for vengeance onto the scapegoat. This may certainly be true of certain forms of rituals; the ritual at Kurumugl discussed by Schechner for instance, acting as it does to divert the need for war between two tribes with the violence that occurs being, aside from the slaughter of animals, enacted in an entirely metaphorical sense. Likewise, the Christian ritual of the Eucharist has long been associated in a very overt sense with the idea of Christ taking the role of scapegoat (a concept which itself can be found in a ritual prescribed in the Hebrew Scriptures). On the other hand, our definition of ritual, as discussed in detail in the first chapter, is a much broader one than that favoured by Girard, who wishes to link the concept very specifically to that of sacrificial ritual. The challenge to follow then is this: through an examination of the rituals of historic re-enactment, it must be demonstrated that re-enacting can be found in a similar manner throughout our new, wider definition of ritual and that as such re-enacting is found throughout other examples of ritual relevant to this study.

#### *¶1. Historical Re-enactment*

For the purposes of this chapter I shall define historical re-enactment as being, in its most basic terms, a staged performance recreating either an established historical event or a fictionalised version of life during a specific historical period, often but not always involving scenes of conflict. These re-enactments can generally be said to carry the hallmarks of a theatrical performance, albeit an improvised one - they involve actors

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<sup>178</sup> Girard, p. 92.

performing the roles of fictional or fictionalised historical characters, communicating lines and ideas, engaging in performed actions (either improvised or choreographed) and they may be said to occur upon a "stage" - there will tend to be a marked-off area in which the re-enactment will occur, in some cases representing a general "historical space" so to speak, whereas in others the ground may be that of an actual historical battle, resulting in a form of site-specific performance (consider the mock-battles held at the anniversary celebrations for Bannockburn in 2014, or the annual festival commemorating the Battle of Tewksbury<sup>179</sup>.)

## ¶2. *The American Civil War*

The re-enactment of the American Civil War may be one of the most interesting examples to be found, in part because, as Cullen notes, it can be traced back to a time very close to the original source, and indeed the first reenactors were veterans of the actual events:

*The first reenactments were staged by Civil War veterans, especially those who were members of the Grand Army of the Republic, a fraternal organisation that attained considerable clout in the closing decades of the nineteenth century. Individual GAR chapters ("posts") would hold "encampments" where members would wear old uniforms, sleep in tents, and recreate the trappings of their soldier days. In 1878, 1881, and 1883, a New Jersey encampment of Union veterans engaged in sham battles with the state's National Guard unit. Such activities became increasingly frequent as the GAR grew in size and commanded more attention in government, community life, and the press.<sup>180</sup>*

These re-enactments were particularly interesting as they united together veterans who had been fighting on both sides of the war, with many Confederate veterans who "would appear at such events and would be treated with growing respect as the century wore on."<sup>181</sup> The reason for this can perhaps be attributed, as Cullen suggests, to a need for a sense of community transcending that in which the veterans found themselves living – "if the enemy had mistaken principles, he understood a soldier's situation far more easily than women, children, or mere civilians could."<sup>182</sup> Can we argue then that

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<sup>179</sup> See <http://www.tewkesburymedievalfestival.org/> (accessed 18/09/2015)

<sup>180</sup> Jim Cullen, *The Civil War in Popular Culture: A Reusable Past* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), p. 182.

<sup>181</sup> Cullen, p. 182.

<sup>182</sup> Cullen, p. 182.

the veterans identified to some extent through their experiences as soldiers first and foremost? The re-enactment of camp life becomes a ritual by which that identity is reinforced even in a time of peace, when the soldier is not needed to carry out his practice of soldiering.

In its current day form Civil War re-enactment is still to some extent based on those original veteran gatherings. Some even attempt to take the performance to the highest possible point of historical fidelity, such as the "hardcores" discussed by Tony Horwitz:

*Hardcores didn't just dress up and shoot blanks. They sought absolute fidelity to the 1860's: its homespun clothing, antique speech patterns, sparse diet and simple utensils... In the field [they] ate only food that Civil War soldiers consumed, such as hardtack and salt pork. And they limited their speech to mid-nineteenth century dialect and topics.*<sup>183</sup>

Although representative of the most extreme end of the re-enactment community, the "hardcores" present a continuation of the "powerful impulse for meticulously re-creating the particulars of camp life"<sup>184</sup> highlighted by Cullen. This behaviour, whilst highlighting a noble goal (that of absolute period authenticity in presentation) can be said to fall foul of a problem which Peter Brook observes to exist within more traditional theatre:

*Inevitably, someone calls for tragedy to be played once again 'the way it is written'. This is fair enough, but unfortunately all the printed word can tell us is what was written on paper, not how it was once brought to life. There are no records, no tapes - only experts, but not one of them, of course, has firsthand knowledge. The real antiques have all gone - only some imitations have survived, in the shape of traditional actors, who continue to play in a traditional way, drawing their inspiration not from real sources, but from imaginary ones, such as the memory of the sound an older actor once made - a sound that in turn was a memory of a predecessor's way.*<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> Tony Horwitz, *Confederates in the Attic* (New York: Vintage Books, 1999), p. 7.

<sup>184</sup> Cullen, p. 182.

<sup>185</sup> Brook, p. 14.

This may for example be seen in the apparent paradox of the hardcore attempt to achieve complete historical fidelity: even in limiting themselves to exactly the same clothing, speech, and behaviours of the people of the time, if it were possible to exactly match those things, still the re-enactment would not be a truly accurate representation: for one thing, the reenactor has the advantage of hindsight, knowing the outcome of the historical battles and their significance to the later development of society in a way that the people of the time could not.

Due to the Civil War being closer in time to our present day than the medieval or renaissance periods, some of Brook's criticisms may not necessarily be directly applicable in the same way as they would be to reenactors of earlier times (for instance we do in fact have the availability of audio and visual recordings of war veterans<sup>186</sup>), still it is the case that by this stage the original reenactors are gone. The recordings and images which exist were all created long after the events being recreated. The reenactor who today strives to meet a sense of historical authenticity does so based not on any first-hand knowledge of how these things should be done but rather on a tradition handed down in a line back to people who, despite their own first-hand knowledge, chose to recreate "a highly sentimentalized view of the war."<sup>187</sup> Indeed the early re-enactments partaken in by those veterans served an important purpose to them which has since by necessity been lost: they served to "affirm a sense of community all too lacking in more conventional social arrangements"<sup>188</sup>, a community specific to the soldiers who fought in that particular conflict.

What role then has stepped in to replace it? Cullen offers a theory which he admits he writes "with some unease"<sup>189</sup>, and indeed the implications are controversial and need to be treated with some delicacy. He begins by noting the "gap between some professional historians, who have emphasised the importance of African American issues since the 1960's, and the amateurs, who are generally willing to note (but not emphasize) the importance of the slavery issue in particular and the role of African Americans in general."<sup>190</sup> He observes that "no person interviewed...would agree that slavery was

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<sup>186</sup> See for instance the footage to be found of various soldiers as recently as the late 1930's that can be found in a youtube search - [https://www.youtube.com/results?search\\_query=civil+war+veteran](https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=civil+war+veteran) (accessed 18/9/2014), including demonstrations of the "rebel yell" battle cry used by the Confederate soldiers.

<sup>187</sup> Cullen, p. 182.

<sup>188</sup> Cullen, p. 182.

<sup>189</sup> Cullen, p. 199.

<sup>190</sup> Cullen, p. 197.

central to the conflict, and nobody seemed all that interested - or comfortable - talking about it"<sup>191</sup> and that "explanations...common from the beginning"<sup>192</sup> regarding an emphasis on the cause of the war being politics rather than slavery was generally put forth.

This of course is a troublesome dichotomy on two levels, firstly that the issue of slavery was an inherently political one (it was political moves around the institution of slavery which was central to the troubles leading up to the Civil War), and secondly that we might claim that both slavery *and* politics, in the sense presumably intended by those interviewed, were central. Despite this, the insistence by the interviewees on separating the two is interesting in terms of how they chose to understand the events which formed an important cultural myth. Cullen suggests that this "gap" may be in part a result of a rift between the academy and the reenactors - that "although hardly a perfectly integrated institution in any sense of that term, the ivory tower"<sup>193</sup> is much more varied in terms of race, class, gender, ethnicity, and politics than it ever was before"<sup>194</sup>. Whilst the overwhelming tendency is for Civil War reenactors to be white. He offers the observation that the popularity of the Civil War in popular culture has generally been at its peak in times of "social or political stress that has shaken the confidence of the creators - and... the audiences - that the United States can offer the comfort and satisfaction stated or implied in its creation."<sup>195</sup>

As a result, "the Civil War has become a banner around which millions can rally, a point of reference that can shore up a center that fears it may not hold."<sup>196</sup> The sense of community found by the veterans then has become a different form of community sense: a community sense in finding support in the face of a political or social stress threatening the perception of what America stands for. Cullen's explanation as to what that stress may be might be both unsettling and fascinating in its implications:

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<sup>191</sup> Cullen, p. 197.

<sup>192</sup> Cullen, p. 197.

<sup>193</sup> Cullen's use of the term "ivory tower" here is an interesting one, implying as it does a level of disdain towards the academic practice of history whilst used within a context that seems very critical in its implications against the amateur view of history held by the re-enactors. Coming from an academic at a very well respected institution (Harvard University) such a bias may seem especially strange, and the implications are not entirely clear.

<sup>194</sup> Cullen, p. 197.

<sup>195</sup> Cullen, p. 199.

<sup>196</sup> Cullen, p. 199.

*What is the source of unease in the case of reenactors? I believe that it is the fear that in this increasingly diverse society, events such as the Civil War (which so many European Americans hold near and dear to their hearts, and in which they have such personal, familial, or assimilationist interests) may become less relevant. In this light, reenacting becomes a ritual... by which a majoritarian United States reassures itself that it, too, has a past, and that that past is as dramatic, interesting, and important as the alternative, multicultural pasts that are increasingly competing with it.*<sup>197</sup>

A ritual created to reinforce a shared identity is a simple enough concept, but there is the danger to see this ritual as what Cullen calls "a veiled form of racism"<sup>198</sup> when we try to place that identity as being one specifically of whiteness - how much more so when placed in the language of a "majoritarian United States"? The fact that the ritual is one specifically linked to the Civil War and the Confederacy, a conflict which within popular culture is strongly associated directly with the issue of the morality of slavery, only increases the thorniness of the issue: an uncomfortable parallel may be drawn between the idea of multicultural history being seen as pushing aside the established majoritarian white history, and the cries of "Northern aggression" used by the Confederate states to describe what was seen as the enforcing by the Union states of an elevation of the rights and innate dignity and humanity of their black slaves.

In the continuing of this analysis then we must strongly emphasise that whilst an awareness of the underlying unfortunate implications exist there is no intent of judgment. Rather the concept of the Civil War re-enactment as a ritual intended to reinforce a narrative central to an identity will be examined in plain terms, whilst attempting to divorce it where possible from the contentious political issues involved. Further, let us consider a remark by Cullen that, in relation to historical fictions (including but not limited to re-enactments) regarding the civil war, "In an interesting way, such historical fictions resemble science fiction, where verisimilitude and fantasy also coexist to serve what might be considered a deeply human, anthropologised need for myth."<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> Cullen, p. 199.

<sup>198</sup> Cullen, p. 199.

<sup>199</sup> Cullen, p. 196.

As has previously been mentioned, it can be said uncontroversially that every culture has its myths, and its rituals, allowing for the creation of identity. For the people of the American South, this identity can be seen as heavily wrapped up in the myth of the Confederacy – Horwitz records his visit to a meeting of the Children of the Confederacy, a group “designed to prep youngsters for Confederate citizenship in rather the same way that Future Farmers of America readied teenagers for agricultural life.”<sup>200</sup>

At the meeting the children recited a pledge to “preserve pure ideals; to study and teach the truths of history (one of the most important of which is, that the War Between the States was not a REBELLION nor was its underlying cause to sustain slavery); and always to act in a manner that will reflect honour upon our noble and patriotic ancestors.”<sup>201</sup> They then proceeded to recite a “catechism” designed to reflect a particular narrative of the South before and during the creation of the Confederacy (e.g. the claim that the slaves “were faithful and devoted and were always ready and willing to serve [their masters]”<sup>202</sup>) as well as “hew[ing] to traditional notions about Southern valor.”<sup>203</sup> Horwitz’s reflection on the catechism is interesting, as he observes that he “began to hear echoes of defeated people’s I’d encountered overseas: Kurds, Armenians, Palestinians, Catholics in Northern Ireland. Like them, Southerners had kept fighting their war by other means.” The implications are fascinating – by creating a mythologised version of the confederacy which downplays the less savoury aspects and emphasises “pure ideals”, “honour”, “nobility”, “patriotism”, those promoting the myths allow a cultural identity steeped in a history that never was, to act as a guidepost to their approach to life. Perhaps we might say that, for the Southerner, re-enactment is one of the more visible rituals of this myth, the recreation of an idealised civil war helping to “make real” the collection of historical facts and details existing otherwise simply as theory.<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>200</sup> Horwitz, p. 36.

<sup>201</sup> Horwitz, p. 37.

<sup>202</sup> Horwitz, p. 37.

<sup>203</sup> Horwitz, p. 37.

Rebecca Schneider offers an analysis of civil war re-enactment which is both similar and in key points departs from that of Cullen and Horwitz. Schneider notes that “the battle of much re-enactment, in art and in war, is a battle concerning the future of the past”<sup>205</sup>, a sentiment seeming to echo Cullen’s observation of the fear amongst European Americans of their past losing its cultural relevance. Although whereas Cullen sees the political and racial issues around the civil war as being something which reenactors seemed uncomfortable with and keen to dismiss, Schneider notes that “Historian David Blight...sees the war as ongoing in that it is continuing to be fought through commemoration”<sup>206</sup> with a specific focus on “the 1913 Gettysburg reunion as a battleground on which the fight for racial justice took a beating”<sup>207</sup> – a reunion of white veterans “presided over by President Woodrow Wilson, a Southerner who had just fired a large number of black federal employees, imposed rigid policies of segregation on those that remained, and who would, in three years time, allow the showing of the racist film *Birth of a Nation* at the White house.”<sup>208</sup> Such that “segregation was enacted as a policy in tandem with, if not by means of re-enactment”<sup>209</sup>.

It is worth noting that in this discussion Schneider observes that “interestingly, Civil War reenactors often cite this reunion as the first re-enactment – when veterans approached each other from the positions they had occupied during the “real” battle, this time marching across the field to shake hands”<sup>210</sup>. This reading of the roots of Civil War re-enactment conflicts with Cullen’s characterisation of the practice having begun some three or more decades before, however if its citation is indeed widespread then it may be seen to represent a form of unifying creation myth within the re-enactment community, and thus the problematic aspects of the anniversary raised by Blight may indeed be well tied into the myth being ritualised. This discrepancy in narratives raises an important point which shall be returned to shortly.

Schneider puts focus on the claim by one reenactor, Chuck Woodhead, that “the civil war isn’t over, and that’s why we fight.”<sup>211</sup> She notes that

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<sup>205</sup> Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (Abingdon, Oxon ; New York: Routledge, 2011), p. 4.

<sup>206</sup> Schneider, p. 11.

<sup>207</sup> Schneider, p. 11.

<sup>208</sup> Schneider, p. 11.

<sup>209</sup> Schneider, p. 11.

<sup>210</sup> Schneider, p. 11.

<sup>211</sup> Schneider, p. 32.



*Woodhead's answer to "Why fight?" might at first seem to challenge the pastness of the past, if being "over" is one of the ways a secular, linear, or progress-oriented Enlightenment model of time disciplines our orientation to events that appear to precede the present. And yet, the quote might also suggest that it is the very pastness of the past that is never complete, never completely finished, but incomplete: cast into the future as a matter for ritual negotiation and as yet undecided interpretive acts of reworking. In this way, events are given to be past, or to become past, by virtue of both their ongoingness and their partialness, their incompleteness in the present.*<sup>212</sup>

This formulation, that the claim that *the Civil War isn't over* implies not that the events of the past lack a "pastness" (or at least that the Civil War, as an ongoing war, cannot be described as a whole as having a pastness), but rather that "pastness" itself is an ongoing thing to be continually reworked and interpreted, would seem to strike at the heart of what is re-enactment within ritual. It is the nature of ritual that it allows the "ongoingness" of "pastness", with each re-enactment being its own attempt at a hermeneutic reading, creating a statement or question regarding the event being re-enacted. The suggestion that "events are given to be past...by virtue of both their ongoingness and their...incompleteness in the present" speaks to the importance of previous events and their interpretations to present an identity formed through repeated reference to, reiteration and reinterpretation of, those events. Further, there is a phenomenological implication found as regards our relation to time: the past is not simply "that which happened", but rather something with which we have an ongoing relationship, being constantly reiterated or reinterpreted as time goes on. Consequently through its ritualized re-enactment, the past becomes not events that statically happened but rather a changing narrative of those events and their relevance to the present: the civil war is not over, because its meaning is not finalised. Compare Horwitz's discussion of the Civil War's conflict being "continued by other means", via a myth which downplays the unsavoury elements of the confederacy whilst highlighting certain traditional ideals – for Horwitz's southerners, the Civil War is not over, and the fight occurs not through armed combat but through the rewriting of the historical narrative.

I will now return to the question of the roots of re-enactment: as previously noted, Cullen suggests that Civil War re-enactments began with the gatherings of veterans immediately following the end of the war, whilst Schneider cites a popular view that the

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<sup>212</sup> Schneider, p. 46.

“first re-enactment” occurred at an organized anniversary event in 1913. It may be suggested that there is a trap to be found here: the tendency of an academic analysis to focus on a particular narrative which will best fit the argument made, thus Cullen may not only suggest that re-enactment downplays issues of racism and slavery but may likely include Schneider’s commentary amongst the “professional historians” whom he places at odds with the “amateurs” engaging in re-enactment with an emphasis on wider political ideology. Likewise Schneider’s emphasis of re-enactment, as rooted in an event with overtly racist implications, results in a loss of the capacity to so easily separate re-enactors and their narratives from historical white supremacy. To observe this is not to say that either author is correct or wrong, or to accuse either of an active twisting of the narrative to better suit a predetermined theory. Rather, the point may be widened: that in those cases wherein the individual re-enactor actively associates a particular lineage and genealogy to his or her re-enactment, they are actively affecting the narrative behind the ritual and consequently the message that they are creating through its performance.

### ¶3. *Ritualised Mythology outside the Civil War*

Can the same observations be made from other forms of re-enactment? Ryan Hatch argues that in the United States medieval reenactors “seek to create an accurate, albeit artificial memory of a particular field of Pre-Modern history usually considered romance or even prehistory in the United States,”<sup>213</sup> observing that the artificial nature of the memory in question is exacerbated as “the lack of medieval sites of consciousness or memory in the United States proves extremely problematic for any seeking to recreate European history before 1650. Without such a connection, a detached sense of romantic nostalgia colors the American perception of the Middle Ages.”<sup>214</sup> In such a case the fictitious past being explored is a different one to the civil war, as it is a “pre-history” – the history not of the United States, the country to which the participants belong, but rather of Europe, the country of their distant ancestors. We might say then that such rituals exist as part of an unusual ancestral myth: lacking a deep and rich history of their own country, the individuals involved create a country for

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<sup>213</sup> Ryan R. Hatch, ‘American Medievalism: Medieval Reenactment as Historical Interpretation in the United States’ (unpublished Master’s Thesis, ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY, 2015), p. 15  
<[http://repository.asu.edu/attachments/158051/content/Hatch\\_asu\\_0010N\\_15263.pdf](http://repository.asu.edu/attachments/158051/content/Hatch_asu_0010N_15263.pdf)>.

<sup>214</sup> Hatch, p. 37.

their hypothetical ancestors to have inhabited, romanticised to allow an idealised past that will feed into the modern identity.

What, however, of the European re-enactors? Certainly they partake in a performance based upon their own past, and yet unlike the Civil War there is no unbroken link to the original battles – indeed modern re-enactment can be traced largely to 19<sup>th</sup> century activities (although it is interesting to note that in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, English Civil War battles were being re-enacted even as the war was still ongoing.<sup>215</sup>) It might seem to be argued that this re-enactment serves a similar goal to that of the re-enactment taking place across the Atlantic: a performance of a romanticised mythological past from which the participants are largely divorced, allowing a reinforcing of a shared group identity by playing out its associated ideals in order to show them as being a strong part of its past, of which it can be proud and place on public display.

I will turn now to another, much darker, form of re-enactment found in American culture in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries: the lynching. Koritha Mitchell notes that “the nation accepted lynching as a valid scenario of exorcism”<sup>216</sup>, a term which in this context refers to what we have previously established to be a ritual. Mitchell notes that “racial violence was often interpreted as a legitimate scenario of exorcism because it contained what citizens had seen before: supposedly righteous white men casting out the evil forces that might threaten their wives and children.”<sup>217</sup> The lynchings became “theatrical”, and followed “a familiar ceremony. A sort of script developed, which included obligatory accusation and forced confession, followed by mutilation and souvenir hunting”<sup>218</sup>, and in doing so helped to push an identity of white supremacy:

*Because black men were said to be natural rapists who targeted white women, lynching was hailed as a wave of avenging alleged rapes and preventing future ones... According to this reasoning, mobs performed an unpleasant but necessary exorcism. If blacks were immoral, they must be rooted out for the safety of white women, white families, and*

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<sup>215</sup> See Howard Giles, ‘A Brief History of Re-Enactment’ <<http://www.eventplan.co.uk/page29.html>> [accessed 28 October 2015].

<sup>216</sup> Koritha Mitchell, *Living with Lynching: African American Lynching Plays, Performance, and Citizenship, 1890-1930*, The New Black Studies Series (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011), p. 24.

<sup>217</sup> Mitchell, p. 24.

<sup>218</sup> Mitchell, p. 24.

*the nation. As this rhetoric circulated through actions as well as words, it helped to restore a sense of superiority for whites whose self-conceptions had been destabilized by the emancipation of slaves...if dark skin no longer automatically kept individuals from participating in society, blacks' inferiority to whites needed to be marked more deliberately.*<sup>219</sup>

The rituals of the lynching may be called a re-enactment in part because of its theatrical nature: "spectators knew that they would see familiar characters...and that these characters would perform a predictable script of forced confession and mutilation"<sup>220</sup>, but there is also a second related re-enactment, which is more directly theatrical:

*During the same decades... African Americans wrote plays about mob violence that tell stories strikingly different from those suggested by lynching photography... while the mob's efforts centred on black death, African American dramatists helped their communities to live, even while lynching remained a reality that would not magically disappear. In the process, these playwrights created the unique genre of lynching drama.*<sup>221</sup>

These "lynching dramas" might be described as re-enactments of the lynching a step removed from the original act of physical violence (although still directly steeped in the larger ongoing incidents of violence inextricably linked to that physical event). Indeed, "dramatists who lived and wrote in the midst of lynching often refused to feature physical violence; their scripts spotlight instead the black home and the impact that the mob's outdoor activities have on the family."<sup>222</sup> Such a performance would, crucially, draw attention to the reality of the victim as victim, rather than the criminal portrayed in the lynching performance. The plays would often be single-act performances which would be performed in private venues, the scripts often published in magazines. Mitchell argues that "the content of the scripts provided a training manual for black communities, encouraging African Americans to rehearse an understanding of lynching that allowed them to mourn because it helped them to maintain a sense of themselves as upstanding citizens unjustly under siege."<sup>223</sup> We see then that the genre of the lynching

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<sup>219</sup> Mitchell, p. 25.

<sup>220</sup> Mitchell, pp. 6–7.

<sup>221</sup> Mitchell, p. 1.

<sup>222</sup> Mitchell, p. 2.

<sup>223</sup> Mitchell, p. 39.

drama, whilst an actual theatrical production in contrast to the other case studies in this chapter, is notable as a ritual which would promote a sense of identity as citizens under siege by oppressors amongst African Americans, and that it is perhaps of interest that this was what may be deemed a counter-ritual: a re-enactment occurring in response to the ritual of the lynching, itself intended to reinforce a sense of identity amongst white Americans.

There is perhaps a further interest in that these rituals themselves seem in part to have arisen from a sense of a lost identity resulting from political changes in the wider culture of the nation. Indeed these causes might be seen as similar to the suggested uncertainties to which Cullen suggests the seemingly more harmless (or at least less actively malicious) civil war re-enactors are reacting.

## **§2. Political Re-Enactment**

Having examined the role that rituals play in the formation of identity within particular (sub)cultures, through overtly performed re-enactments, in a manner which is in itself often infused with politics and political identity, I shall now examine such rituals as they appear in the distinctly political sphere. More specifically, I shall examine the American political process around the campaigning and elections for the office of President, as it has emerged within the television age through to the controversial events of the 2016 election of Donald Trump. Within this analysis we shall see that the Presidential campaigns have a tendency themselves towards re-enactment, ritual, and a heavy emphasis on performance.

### **¶4. *Kennedy vs Nixon***

President John F Kennedy is generally considered to have been the starting point for the central role of television in the American political process. The most notable event in this development was the series of televised “debates” between Kennedy and Richard Nixon broadcast in September and October 1960, to an estimated audience of between 85 and 120 million.<sup>224</sup> After Kennedy defeated Nixon in the election, the question was immediately raised as to the role the debates had played in the result. The answer to this question is not one which can be immediately answered, with a general consensus offered, for instance, by Lang & Lang:

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<sup>224</sup> Kurt Lang and Gladys Engel Lang, *Politics and Television* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1968), p. 213.

*The evidence from [various studies] shows that the first debate accelerated the movement toward Kennedy and strengthened pro-Democratic commitments. Nevertheless, one cannot definitively conclude that these changes would not have occurred in any event, with or without the debates. Kennedy had already been making headway among voters, and it is possible that these votes would have crystallised as they did simply as a function of time. One thing is clear, however: the debates provided new arguments for supporting Kennedy and, therefore, strengthened convictions. The public, in particular, thought the debates the most important element that led to Kennedy's victory. Perhaps the same amount of enthusiastic support for his campaign would not have been forthcoming without this dramatic confrontation between the two candidates. No one will ever be able to tell.<sup>225</sup>*

An emphasis should be firmly placed here on the view of the public: whilst it is true that we will never be able to tell for certain if they were correct to place such high importance on the role of the debates, it is not up for debate that such importance was indeed placed. An understanding of why this might be the case might be found in part through an analysis of the debate as performance. Consider the following frame taken from the first debate, in which Nixon was decidedly less prepared for a television broadcast than in the subsequent meetings:

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<sup>225</sup> Lang and Lang, p. 225.



*Figure 1 Kennedy and Nixon during televised debate, available online at:*

*<https://www.cla.purdue.edu/history/course/debate/kennedynixon/publichistory.html> (accessed September 5 2018)*

Within this image we see what may be one of the essential factors within the performance of the debate: body language. Compare Kennedy, his demeanour confident and calm, with sweaty Nixon insecurely covering his mouth with his handkerchief, his shifty scowl projecting a level of distrust and insecurity toward his opponent. In this performance the space is the television studio, or perhaps rather it is the area being broadcast at a particular time by the camera: the point of audience concentration. The action and the utterance are less clear, and perhaps there is overlap. Is Nixon's body language a form of the utterance, or is it merely action to support the utterance? And what then is being uttered? It might seem the case that the performance here is occurring on two separate levels, as when we listen to simply the audio track we might well find ourselves believing that Nixon carried the debate well, and gave a strong performance. And yet when his appearance and mannerism is placed alongside that of Kennedy an entirely new picture emerges, his character seems to lose its authority. His behaviour is action which rather than supporting subverts the image he wishes to project, his words utter one thing but his face another.

Perhaps another element of Kennedy's performance that should be noted is his public image: Kennedy's "image was simpler [than Nixon's], but also more "personal"; it was less closely tied to his past political efforts, and so Kennedy, unlike Nixon, emerged more as a "man" than as a "political man.'" (ibid p.228) Consider in light of the above image the contrast of Kennedy the man vs Nixon the political man (or politician). Nixon's sleazy appearance might on an unconscious level act as a confirmation of that

image. An action of reinforcement: reinforcing Nixon as a politician, reinforcing politicians as sweaty and shifty, reinforcing Nixon as embodying the negative traits of politicians, and so on. Likewise Kennedy's confident persona lacks these negatives, and so his action helps to reinforce that he is not these things, that he is more regular man than political man, that he is not that which Nixon embodies in the most negative sense. This dichotomy between the regular man and the political man is one which we will see returned to in later political campaigns, just as the subject of debates and debate performances will re-occur.

¶5. *The Quadrennial re-enactment of the debate.*

Whilst the Kennedy-Nixon debate was the first to be televised, it was most certainly not the last debate and indeed since the 1976 election season the candidate debates have since become a standard element of the election campaigning process, with much media attention given and a great deal of analysis put forth after each debate by a range of people from expert analysts to general members of the public intent to weigh in on who won and why. Further, such has been the impact and importance of these debates that they have created a precedent for such debates to occur in the political process of other countries. The term "debate", it may be noted, is perhaps not entirely accurate: the candidates are in turn asked questions on specific points of policy, to which they are given a set time to answer followed by a short response from their opponent. After the questions each candidate gives a closing statement. This format is essentially unchanged since 1960. The debate has become a ritual, a re-enactment of that first debate in which the opportunity is given for the American people to judge the candidates based, not merely upon their words and policies but, upon the performance, the behaviours and images put forth by the candidates to affect the audience response.

Perhaps Kennedy is responsible for another ritual of re-enactment, that of the politician as man. Consider now Nixon playing his *Piano Concerto #1* on live television:





*Figure 2 Nixon plays Piano Concerto #1 Available online at:*

*<https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/405464772680389851/?lp=true> (Accessed September 5 2018)*

The Nixon who plays his own composed piano piece is a very different Nixon to the one who seemed so decidedly political (in the most negative sense) on the televised debate. His facial expression suggests a level of serenity and being lost in his music, perhaps a level of being a sensitive or artistic soul. A love of music connects on a deep level, with the musical performance acting as a ritual which reinforces a new identity: this is a man who is at his heart just like any other man. Compare President Bill Clinton:



*Figure 3 Bill Clinton plays the Saxophone. Image by Saxon Reed, used without permission*

Clinton's saxophone playing is very different to Nixon's piano, suggesting rather than middle-class sophistication an element of "cool", associating with a more urban, lower class, underprivileged, segment of American society. Despite this difference the performance enacts essentially the same ritual: that Clinton despite his status as a politician has an image of being man out with the political. He is, we are to believe, one of the ordinary people. This image is one which was in some ways continued in 2016 when Hillary Clinton, his wife, ran for the office of President: consider this image from Hillary Clinton's being confirmed nominee at the Democratic National Convention:



*Figure 4 Bill Clinton kicks balloons as Hillary Clinton laughs. Available online at: <https://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2016-07-29/tim-kaine-and-bill-clinton-loved-the-balloons-at-the-dnc> (accessed September 5 2018)*

Bill Clinton's apparent concern with balloons during a major televised celebration is an incredibly humanising performance, and one which may well have been calculated: after all, the 2016 campaign was very notably one of a personal nature. Members of the public were asked to support not "Clinton" but "Hillary", a sharp contrast to the "Trump" campaign led by her opponent. By basing the campaign around the candidate's forename an element of familiarity was created, emphasising Mrs Clinton's identity as a woman rather than a political woman, a move which, in other circumstances, might well have helped to secure an electoral victory.

The opponent in this election, Donald Trump, may however have demonstrated the natural ultimate conclusion of this distinction: a candidate who is not only more man than political man, but who has no attachment to politics at all. This thread is one picked up by Naomi Klein, who claims that "Trump didn't just enter politics as a so-called outsider, somebody who doesn't play by the rules. He entered politics playing by

a completely different set of rules – the rules of branding.”<sup>226</sup> We shall return to the question of “branding” later, but for now consider the following. Prior to his running for office Trump was a real estate mogul and reality TV star, and so his campaign would be run on lines which would emphasise that his lack of political experience was what, in some bizarre manner, qualified him for the highest political office. The Trump campaign may be associated with a rise in populist politics, an emphasis on the politician as connected to the general populace, their desires and wants. His speeches were notable for being apparently ad libbed, short on substance and often making wild promises with no apparent thought placed behind the mechanics of their being carried out. We might suggest that the success of the Trump campaign was to extend the ritual of the candidate’s image as the not-political-man to encompass every action taken. Indeed as we shall see in ¶6, Trump’s behaviour and image may well have had an effect on how his campaign was perceived and indeed led to the underestimation by his opponents that led to his unexpected victory.

¶6. *The 2016 debates: A study in factors of ritual*

In January 2017, *Her Opponent*, an “ethnodramatic verbatim performance”<sup>227</sup> conceived by Maria Guadalupe offered a unique exploration of the factors involved in the ritual of the presidential debate. *Her Opponent* saw actors attempt to recreate exactly selected segments from the three Clinton/Trump debates, with the same body language, actions, inflections, and words, but with the genders of the two participants reversed, replacing Clinton with “Jonathan Gordon” and opposing him to Brenda King:

*Maria Guadalupe, Professor at INSEAD, said: "Many commented before and after the 2016 U.S. presidential election how much gender was an issue in our perception of the two candidates. Would we feel the same about Donald Trump if he were a woman and about Secretary Clinton if she were a man? Is there anything in the way when they expressed themselves that make us like them more or less just because*

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<sup>226</sup> Naomi Klein, *No Is Not Enough: Resisting Trump’s Shock Politics and Winning the World We Need*. (S.I.: ALLEN LANE, 2017), p. 33.

<sup>227</sup> ““HER OPPONENT” RE-STAGES 2016 PRESIDENTIAL DEBATES WITH GENDER-REVERSED CASTING’ <<https://www.insead.edu/news/2017-presidential-debates-gender-reversed-casting>> [accessed 4 May 2017].

*of their gender? This work is an attempt at answering those questions through experiencing the two characters with genders reversed.*"<sup>228</sup>

The results of the performance may have been more enlightening than expected, with co-creator Joe Salvatore remarking that, "At the time of the debates, I dismissed [Trump] as awkward, unskilled, untrained...Now I'm not so sure that I would do that"<sup>229</sup> and that "We both thought that the inversion would confirm our liberal assumption – that no one would have accepted Trump's behaviour from a woman, and that the male Clinton would seem like a much stronger candidate. But we kept checking in with each other and realised that this disruption –a major change in perception- was happening."<sup>230</sup> Likewise, after the live performance one reporter observed that

*Many were shocked to find that they couldn't seem to find in Jonathan Gordon what they had admired in Hillary Clinton – or that Brenda King's clever tactics seemed to shine in moments where they'd remembered Donald Trump flailing or lashing out. For those Clinton voters trying to make sense of the loss, it was by turns bewildering and instructive, raising as many questions about gender performance and effects of sexism as it answered.*<sup>231</sup>

Whilst many of the questions raised by *Her Opponent* involving gender, sexism, and so on may be incredibly difficult to answer in the short term, there are certainly a number of interesting factors to be considered for analysis in this case.

To begin with, consider that this performance was a re-enactment in almost the most pure and literal sense, with an exacting reproduction of every element of the original performances – something which one does not generally expect to see in a regular theatrical production. It is however also a different sort of re-enactment to those which we have previously seen: whereas the ritualised re-enactment attempts to capture the

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<sup>228</sup> "'HER OPPONENT' RE-STAGES 2016 PRESIDENTIAL DEBATES WITH GENDER-REVERSED CASTING'.

<sup>229</sup> Alexis Soloski, 'He Said, She Said: Gender-Bending the Presidential Debates' <[https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/30/theater/he-said-she-said-gender-bending-the-presidential-debates.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/30/theater/he-said-she-said-gender-bending-the-presidential-debates.html?_r=0)> [accessed 4 May 2017].

<sup>230</sup> NYU Web Communications, 'What If Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton Had Swapped Genders?' <<http://www.nyu.edu/content/nyu/en/about/news-publications/news/2017/march/trump-clinton-debates-gender-reversal>> [accessed 5 May 2017].

<sup>231</sup> Communications.

spirit of the thing in order to promote ideas, concepts, or identity, and indeed the debate being re-enacted is itself a re-enactment in those terms, this is a re-enactment in form, fully scripted and with no space for diversion and intended not to reinforce or create but rather to question and perhaps to comment.

Of further interest are the “liberal assumptions” described by the creators, who were professional academics whilst the audience “appeared mostly drawn from academic circles”.<sup>232</sup> Does it then follow that the responses to the performance suggest a fault in thinking prevalent in liberal academia, and if so is that fault regarding issues of gender or is it rather in having originally assumed those issues to be applicable to the defeat of a candidate who presumably would not have been given their support had she represented the opposing party? It would certainly be of interest to see how conservative-leaning academics interpreted the performance, and what if any of their assumptions were confirmed or disconfirmed (significantly, would a Trump supporter find King to be a less attractive speaker than Gordon?)

It is worthy of note that “people thought that the male version of Clinton was feminine, and that was bad.”<sup>233</sup> The implication here is there are feminine behaviours which, when displayed by male politicians, will sour an audience towards them, but what of the reverse? Although no comment is given in reports that the female version of Trump was seen to be overly masculine by any audience members, is there the possibility that to some, or perhaps to a hypothetical non-Liberal audience, such a position might have been spotted?

The fact that the gender of the speakers does seem to have had an effect on the perception of the re-enactment by the audience is important as it emphasises that gender was indeed playing a role. Judith Butler’s work on gender and performativity offers an insight into this: to Butler, particular behaviours and actions are gendered. When she states that “gender proves to be performative – that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be”<sup>234</sup>, she reverses the view that “gendered” behaviours are thus because they stem from a particular biological make up, but rather that an individual’s perceived

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<sup>232</sup> Soloski.

<sup>233</sup> Communications.

<sup>234</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Thinking Gender (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 25.

gender identity is created by their carrying out those behaviours. Thus, it may follow that the appearance of a male “Hillary” as being “too feminine” stems from the characters behaviour being a performance which creates a feminine gender, even whilst otherwise presenting as a male. Revealed here is that the apparent “exact” re-enactment of behaviours, actions, and so on becomes, through the flipping of the participants’ biological sexes, becomes a subversive re-enactment: there is now an additional factor in the debate, as a dysphoric gendered performance not present in the original event is now revealed. In analysing the effects of this genderedness, it may be tempting to turn to Butler’s discussion of drag and cross-dressing, through which she argues “the notion of an original or primary identity is often parodied”<sup>235</sup> however *Her Opponent* does not intentionally seek to parody: rather it attempts to imitate exactly particular actions the gendered aspects of which are an apparently unexpected side-effect. This is a departure from the notion of drawing overt attention to the markers of gender, yet it may be argued that when we become aware that those gendered markers exist awareness of them is nevertheless drawn by necessity. Salvatore’s initial hypothesis that a simple swap of physical gender would result in an almost binary change in perception (and one which it might be noted seems to have been based on changing the minds of conservatives – the claim made after all was that Trump’s behaviour would have been unacceptable from a woman and that a male Clinton would have seemed a stronger candidate) seems then to have been far too simple, viewing gender as existing in terms of the most obvious indicators rather than as a subtle whole. The simple gender binary is highlighted as insufficient: whether an argument is more convincing from a man than from a woman is replaced with the apparent weakness or strength of an argument from a feminine man or a masculine woman.

Can an insight into why Trump was so appealing to his supporters really be gained given the fact that a “pure” re-enactment was not occurring, due to the effect of gender? Returning to Klein, the suggestion is made that “you can’t disentangle Trump the man from Trump the brand; those two entities merged long ago”<sup>236</sup> and that “his brand is being the ultimate boss, the guy who is so rich he can do whatever he wants, whenever he wants, and to whomever he wants”<sup>237</sup>.

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<sup>235</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 137.

<sup>236</sup> Klein, p. 35.

<sup>237</sup> Klein, p. 33.

The concept of branding, as understood by Klein, may be a key factor in the evolution of the Presidential campaigning ritual: whilst Trump may be the first successful Presidential candidate to be entirely man-but-not-political-man, he also takes it one step further, being not political-man but rather brand. Klein describes the brand business model as follows: “Create a transcendent idea or brand surrounding your company. Use it to connect with consumers who share the values. Then charge a steep premium for products that are less about the objects themselves than about the profound human desire to be part of a tribe, a circle of belonging.”<sup>238</sup> This sense of belonging is a sense of requiring an affirmation of identity, and so in a sense we can see loyalty to a brand become the performance of a ritual. In this case support of Trump may be seen as a ritual of identifying with the values of the “ultimate boss” – values which Klein notes have been reinforced through all sorts of brand-reinforcing performances on reality TV and in the realm of professional wrestling such that, in his election campaign, he was “using all the reality-simulation skills that he had picked up from years at the helm of a top-rated TV show.”<sup>239</sup>

We can surmise the possibility of a further facet behind the surprise response to *Her Opponent*: that in the reproduction the debate is presented minus the brand. The Trump brand is one which will polarise – those who associate with it will place that identity over the product (policies), but likewise those who identify against the brand may place that identity over concern for product (performance). In removing the brand is the performance caused to be viewed based upon other factors/merits which were previously overlooked?

This concept of brand may not be entirely new: it might be argued that the political parties have themselves become a form of brand, with many voters voting according to party loyalty rather than any innate interest in the differences politically between them. In this case what becomes new is rather the transfer of brand loyalty from party to candidate. We might also say that the concept of brand in this sense ties back to the primary theme of the §1 and the activities of historical reenactors: that of mythology. Just as the descendants of the Confederates base their identity around a history that does not really exist, with the idea of the Confederacy more important than the actual actions it carried out, so too do the voters following the Trump brand rally around an idea, a

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<sup>238</sup> Klein, p. 25.

<sup>239</sup> Klein, p. 50.



living myth, rather than around the reality of Trump per se. As we move on to the final section of this chapter we shall see a continuance of this pattern.

### §3. Academia

Let this section begin with a hypothetical question: Is academia a religion? It has its temples (the universities), its priests (the academics) and its congregants (the students), its founding myths (the “martyrdoms” of Socrates and Galileo), and it has of course its rituals. At their most obvious these rituals are grand and ornate, such as the robes and processions of the graduation ceremony, but in other cases they are commonplace. The ritual of the lecture, in which one learned figure speaks to a class of assembled learners. The tutorial, in which a smaller group of learners is guided in discussing the lecture. The conference, with its general unchanging structure – panels in which speakers read a paper for twenty minutes followed by ten minutes of questions, the keynote speaker, post-conference alcohol.

Obviously the analogy is flawed and can only be taken so far – academia lacks major qualifiers of an actual religion, such as the worship of a supernatural element of reality, or indeed general agreement behind any particular core doctrines. We will note however that in posing such a thought experiment we see the threads of this chapter continue to stand out visibly. Academia has its myths and its rituals, what of its brands and its re-enactments? The question which is now set before us for examination is: does academia also derive its identity from a myth, a brand? What are the facets of this myth that are placed on display through its rituals, and what is the role played by re-enacting within them, if any?

#### ¶7. *The Conference and the Q&A*

In order to highlight one of the more major rituals of the academic calendar, that of the academic conference, I shall present as a case study what may be deemed a subversive ritual: the third biennial *Performance Philosophy* conference which took place in Prague in June 2017. According to the “manifesto” which was released in advance of the conference,

*The usual structure of academic conferences is frequently bemoaned,  
but there is often a lack of initiative or time to try out alternatives.*

*Performance philosophy seeks to offer a space in which, together, we experiment with new formats and thus train our sense-for-alternatives.*

*It is in this spirit that the conference dramaturgy has been conceived as an experimental setting in which all participants are invited to experience as such, and engage with, over the course of the event. In order to help us become aware of our own blindnesses we call upon you to act as ethnographers yourselves and to engage with various parts of the conference as participant observers, with a view to exploring and describing the specific form of performativity at play in each instance.<sup>240</sup>*

One might question whether such grandiose claims are not overly pretentious, although the question may then be returned: is this not in part the purpose of a manifesto? It is the rhetorical power of the speech as much as the ideas within it that hold the attention of the audience and remain in memory – is the manifesto perhaps its own ritual then? Regardless, the manifesto contains interesting ideas, in particular the idea of “fields”:

*Each field opens with a lecture. The group in attendance then splits into two tracks. One half follows a more theoretical, the other a more practical trajectory...Afterwards, the whole group comes back together for a collective discussion about what happened (and what was missed) in each track.<sup>241</sup>*

The field differs from the standard panel in two ways: firstly and most obviously in the splitting of the group – some attending the “theoretical” side which resembled the standard panel, and others attending the “practical” which consisted generally of a workshop of some variety. Secondly there was the “discussion” at the end – it was briefly noted at one field that there was disagreement between “discussion” or “talk” for this section, as in German the latter “sounded better – much more informal”. Indeed, the informality was emphasised with the talk beginning with a short “game” before moving into a free discussion between participants. The informality of the discussion itself acted as a powerful question on the purpose of conferences: as one participant in the final

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<sup>240</sup> ‘Performance Philosophy Prague 2017 Manifest’ <<http://web.flu.cas.cz/ppprague2017/manifest.html>> [accessed 30 June 2017].

<sup>241</sup> ‘Performance Philosophy Prague 2017 Manifest’.

session of the conference noted, “the standard game of asking questions at a conference is self-aggrandizing bullshit” – a game which is well summarised by Joseph Heath, who explains that, “Philosophy has what could best be described as an adversarial disciplinary culture, something that manifests itself most clearly in how the Q&A goes after a research talk. Basically, after people present their philosophical views, the audience members try to tear them apart. Every question is a variation on “here’s why I think you’re wrong...” It is not supportive.”<sup>242</sup>

This lack of support, Heath believes, is important and necessary to academic philosophy, as “the only thing keeping us tethered to the world is the disciplinary culture, and the fact that we have to defend ourselves, in a room full of people who have spent decades listening to arguments and identifying bad ones.”<sup>243</sup> This practice, he implies, goes all the way back to Socrates acting as an adversary to the people of Athens to whom he pitched his questions. Is the ritual of the Q&A then in some sense a twisted re-enactment of the Socratic dialogue? Certainly it could be said to be a continuous ritual confirming the alleged adversarial position of academic philosophers to their colleagues, but is it wrong to refer to this attitude as bullshit? The replacement of the Q&A with a group discussion could certainly be said to ask that exact question: the ritual of the Q&A exists in a certain form, its skeleton remaining, but the essence has been changed, a new ritual of questioning: “is the traditional way really what we as philosophers are?” Further, by bringing the concept of games to the forefront an even more subversive question is raised: “is it acceptable to have fun?” By bringing play to the forefront at a conference, a setting which is technically work and which as such should be expected to be dry and dull and a chore, a direct challenge is inescapably made to actively question the foundations of what is taken for granted as the standardised form/ritual of the conference. This was indeed further emphasised in the manner that chairs would explain structure (e.g “you can either stay here for some talks you know almost nothing about, or leave to go to a workshop you know almost nothing about.”)

The aim of the conference to act as an experiment, then, was emphasised through its use of the introduction of play to established rituals, so as to act in a subversive questioning

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<sup>242</sup> ‘Adversarialism in Philosophy: A Defence | In Due Course’ <<http://induecourse.ca/adversarialism-in-philosophy-a-defence/>> [accessed 5 July 2017].

<sup>243</sup> ‘Adversarialism in Philosophy’.

manner. That the conference ended with socialising over wine suggests that some rituals at least are universal, but is even such a claim accurate? A conference taking place in for instance Saudi Arabia or Utah could reasonably be expected to lack alcohol, or in the latter case coffee amongst the available refreshments. How much can we remove from the ritual of the conference before it becomes unrecognisable?

Heath's description of the adversarial nature of philosophy is one which any academic philosopher will recognise as an accurate reflection of the field and yet that it can be removed from a conference environment whilst that environment remains recognisably one of academic philosophy, shows it to be non-essential. What else can we do to remove recognised and accepted elements of academia from academia whilst still retaining its essence? Or indeed does an essence actually exist? Is it the case perhaps that a defence of existing practices will be based on a defence not of the reality of what it is that makes the institution of academia but rather a loyalty to the academic brand, in which the rituals create a mythical Platonic form of the academy, an exclusive club for members to claim their identity around?

#### ¶8. *The Academic Brand*

This academic brand is one worthy of consideration. We have previously noted with little overt criticism the pejorative label of the “ivory tower”, an implication that academia is somehow in a position of disconnect from the everyday activity of society; perhaps suggesting a monk-like separation from the carnal public, or the imagery of the tower bringing to mind an element of the “head in the clouds” stereotype that can be traced all the way back to criticism by his contemporaries of Socrates himself. Whilst we may rally against such a caricature, with most academics likely to insist on the work having some concrete value outside the walls of the classrooms and lecture theatres, is it the case that loyalty to the brand also risks encouraging the public to take such a view? When Heath tells us that “philosophers...never have any positive suggestions”<sup>244</sup> and that “colleagues exist to tell you why you are wrong”<sup>245</sup>, is the layperson likely, when comparing to the sort of cultural environment they are familiar with in a non-academic workspace, to take it that philosophers are simply regular members of the public or to

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<sup>244</sup> ‘Adversarialism in Philosophy’.

<sup>245</sup> ‘Adversarialism in Philosophy’.

assume rather that on some level our activities are simply arguing for the sake of arguing, just as according to the stereotype?

If the brand of academia is indeed the ivory tower, then we must recognise that there are two faces of the brand: those of the brand according to its followers and the brand as understood by “outsiders”. Returning to ¶6, in which it was proposed that the presence of the Trump brand may have affected reception to a political debate, we might also propose that many arguments taking place around the value of the academy, its purpose, and the methods employed within it are coloured by the manner in which its brand is perceived and followed.

#### ¶9. *The Lecture*

Another obvious example of ritual within academia is that of the lecture: the setting in which an academic, who is an authority figure, imparts knowledge to a captive audience of students. The format of the lecture is of great interest in this discussion. William Clark notes that the medieval lecture was similar to a church sermon, in that note-taking was not the norm and indeed “medieval training focused on memory... and it remained mostly oral-aural”<sup>246</sup>. The lecturer would be speaking on the topic of a set book, which he “read aloud, digested, and commented on”<sup>247</sup> whilst remaining “immobile and, eventually, elevated at a *cathedra*”<sup>248</sup> - a chair similar to that of a bishop which indicated that the lecturer had the right “to speak with authority on canonical academic texts, apropos his particular degree.”<sup>249</sup> Clark further comments on the ritualistic nature of the lecture from the *cathedra* when he notes that “one must be authorised to perform the rite, and must do it in an authorised manner.”<sup>250</sup> This sort of ritual, crucially, should have resulted in uniformity:

*a lecture in Paris should amount to the same as a lecture in Oxford or Bologna or elsewhere on the same topic...a master or doctor cast in Oxford or Bologna should be able to perform in the scholastic theatre*

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<sup>246</sup> William Clark, *Academic Charisma and the Origins of the Research University* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), p. 71.

<sup>247</sup> Clark, p. 71.

<sup>248</sup> Clark, p. 72 (original emphasis).

<sup>249</sup> Clark, p. 72.

<sup>250</sup> Clark, p. 72.

*as well as one cast in Paris since the same texts supposedly lorded over all.*<sup>251</sup>

It is perhaps interesting to note, for all that my question of academia as a religion was meant more for provocation than for a note of truth, the parallels drawn by Clark in regards to the medieval institution are stark: the lecturer speaking *ex cathedra* just as does the pontiff, the students in the pews as congregation, the expectation by both the audience and the institution that any lecture will follow the same dogma as regards to the canonical texts. This “liturgical academia”, along with the suggestion of the lecture as in some way a theatrical performance, survived according to Clark into the early modern period:

*Lecturing resembled acting, which, at least for some academics, was tied to the public persona associated with the chair. An academic who held a chair was required to enact a persona in a theatrical space, which, given low enrolments, might have meant playing to an empty hall, and all too often did. The system of semesters reinforced the liturgical aspect of lecturing. At least ideally, the same parts of an academic liturgy were repeated at the same time every year as part of the “biannual drama of the lecture” in which the professor played “his role.”*<sup>252</sup>

Has much changed? While exact details may not be identical there is still a similar theme running throughout the history of the lecture up until today – the lecture generally occurs within a space set aside for the purpose, the “liturgical” manner of having particular lectures occur on particular days still survives to an extent via the module specification and structure, although the exact placement of a particular module within the academic year may not be so fixed and thus the curriculum is less rigid than it may have been. The lecturer must put on a persona, that of the lecturing academic, even if the tying of that persona to a particular chair held by a given professor is less so much of a notable occurrence in most modern universities. This liturgical pattern of curriculum highlights that a given module is re-enacted regularly for each new class of students. Further those patterns and similarities which have survived from the medieval through to the university of today demonstrate the manner in which the lecture format

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<sup>251</sup> Clark, p. 73.

<sup>252</sup> Clark, p. 83.

has remained a re-enactment throughout the centuries albeit which one which has evolved with the changing habits and needs of the ages.

### *Summary*

In this chapter the theory put forward in chapters 1 and 2 has been extended into a concrete examination of re-enactments. Central is the idea that our behaviours may be seen as rituals intended to state, question, or reinforce our sense of identity, and that these rituals occur within a *theatrum mundi*, wherein any location can become a stage of ritual as needed. We have seen this idea applied in multiple ways: in the rituals revolving around a specific cultural identity tied to geography and history, occurring in manners that are both highly obvious as performances and more mundane whilst still holding the qualities of ritual, in the rituals of the political process, and in the rituals of the academy. We have also attempted to introduce several new concepts: in particular the concept of the brand, and the manner in which it allows identity to be centred around an idea and the things that idea represents, often more than the reality behind it.

One idea from earlier chapters which may be notable for its absence, however, is that of play. Whilst play was certainly discussed within the context of academia, what of elsewhere? We may consider for example the role of games in the political process: watching the political debates together as a group and predicting results, for instance, or the heated discussions that occur around poll results. Does this show a form of gamification of the political process, causing it to be approached in a similar manner to that in which the individual would approach, say, professional sports? Likewise in the context of the historical re-enaction, whilst a level of difference has been acknowledged between those who insist on absolute historic fidelity and those who are more concerned with what might be dubbed passable realism, what of the possibility of an individual attempting intentional anachronism? Can doing so be used to create a subversive ritual which throws questions directly to the heart of what exactly is occurring through casting a light upon that which is immediate enough to be considered invisible? Such questions may not have immediate answers as they suggest a level of awareness of the role of such activities which most participants are likely not to be in conscious possession of. Nevertheless they remain.

In the following chapter, the role of performance in academia shall be narrowed down further, in order to focus on the single subject area of philosophy.

## Chapter Four: Performance as First Philosophy

In this chapter I will examine a specific example of performative ritual in action, that of *performance as first philosophy*. To make this claim, we must first ensure that we have an understanding of the question, what is first philosophy? In §1 this question will be explored in two ways. First, we will explore the simple meaning of ‘first philosophy’. Second, we will examine what exactly thinkers such as Aristotle, Edmund Husserl, and Emmanuel Levinas understood first philosophy to be (§1). Having established this, I will then explain and unpack my thesis that first philosophy should be understood as being performance (§2). Having done so I will address some possible criticisms which a hypothetical opponent may make toward this claim (§3). In §2, I will then concentrate on the question of what it means for philosophy to be performed. This shall be done by first examining the ways in which various thinkers have “performed” their work (§4), and then by taking a diversion into the procedure of writing itself, including my own methodology, in order to draw out the manner in which the very act of writing is a collection of performances (§5).

After doing this I will turn my attentions from direct performance to the question of those factors which act against a traditional view of philosophy as a pursuit of truth and reason (§6-8). I propose that, when properly understood, these factors may be taken into account by the philosopher and combatted through carefully selected methodologies. I will then put forward a phenomenological account of emotions, based largely upon the work of Heidegger (§9) for reasons which will be made apparent in §3. The final application of all of these ideas shall then be embarked upon in §3, where I will offer a direct means for the application of the newly suggested model of emotions, along with some suggested examples of how this model will work in practice.

### §1. First Philosophy

#### ¶1. What is First Philosophy?

In Aristotle’s initial usage, *first philosophy* was synonymous with what we now refer to as metaphysics – in fact the book which we now refer to as the *Metaphysics* was given that title by a later compiler, and Aristotle himself referred to it simply as first



philosophy. An understanding of what he may have meant by this can be found in his discussion of metaphysics as a search for “first principles”, understood through his defining of beginning as “the first point from which a thing either is or comes to be or is known”.<sup>253</sup> If first philosophy then is that through which philosophy is, or comes to be, or is known, then through its context as metaphysics, which is the philosophy of existence, of causes, and so on, we can understand that to Aristotle first philosophy is the philosophy upon which other philosophy must draw: it is in understanding the nature of things, their beginnings and causes, that we may then build up our understanding of how the other areas of philosophy fit together.

Jeffner Allen, in his discussion of Husserl’s first philosophy, would seem to agree when he writes that “it is that philosophy which, among the various philosophies which comprise philosophy as a whole, is precisely *the* first.”<sup>254</sup> It is, further, “the beginning of philosophy as such...a self-contained discipline, with its own problems concerning the beginning of philosophy.”<sup>255</sup> Husserl makes clear his thoughts as to where such a discipline shall be found, declaring that “genuine philosophy, the idea of which is the actualising of absolute cognition, is rooted in pure phenomenology.”<sup>256</sup> It behoves us to notice here that a linguistic jump has been made: whereas in Aristotle’s work ‘first philosophy’ was synonymous with metaphysics, we can no longer say that first philosophy is synonymous with a field – first philosophy has taken upon itself the meaning of “that which is primal in philosophy”, and whilst to Husserl phenomenology is first philosophy, that is not to say that first philosophy is phenomenology (that is that the two phrases can be made to represent the same concept).

This change, if retroactively applied, will allow us to consider in a new light Rene Descartes’ *Meditations in First Philosophy*. The first philosophy of which Descartes speaks seems, on a simple reading, to be the same first philosophy as that of Aristotle. Descartes’ train of thought leads him to explore the basic metaphysical components of the world as he experiences it, beginning with certain a priori concepts (the cogito)

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<sup>253</sup> Aristotle, *The Works of Aristotle Vol.8, Metaphysica*.1013a15-20.

<sup>254</sup> Jeffner Allen, ‘What Is Husserl’s First Philosophy’, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 42.4 (1982), 610–20 (p. 611).

<sup>255</sup> Jeffner Allen, pp. 611–12.

<sup>256</sup> Edmund Husserl, Edmund Husserl, and Edmund Husserl, *General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology*, Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, 1st bk (The Hague ; Boston : Hingham, MA, USA: M. Nijhoff ; Distributors for the U.S. and Canada, Kluwer Boston, 1982), p. XXII.

which he believes must come prior to everything else. Yet is the first philosophy of Descartes' *Meditations* the same first philosophy which he is exploring? We might suggest otherwise. Descartes himself would seem to suggest that he takes epistemology to be first philosophy: the *Meditations* begin with the application of radical scepticism to the point of doubting everything beyond one's own existence, and it is only after establishing the possibility of knowing things to be true that he is able to begin to build up his system of metaphysics. However, whilst he may claim that a part of his meditative approach is to question such things it would seem that the entire system is built upon a presupposition of the reliability of formal logic.

So far we have seen three, if not four, suggested 'first philosophies': Metaphysics, logic, perhaps epistemology, phenomenology. Is there another option that has been put forth? One answer to this question comes from Levinas, who declares that first philosophy is ethics. But what does he mean by this? He declares that "the correlation between *knowledge*, understood as disinterested contemplation, and *being*, is, according to our philosophical tradition, the occurrence of meaning (*sens*). The comprehension of being – the semantic of this verb – would thus be the very possibility of or the occasion for wisdom and the wise and, as such, is *first philosophy*."<sup>257</sup>

Here we see, first and foremost, that Levinas continues in the tradition of Husserl, viewing first philosophy as primal (the "possibility of wisdom"). Indeed Levinas would have us agree that "Husserlian phenomenology...is one of the culminating points in Western philosophy"<sup>258</sup> and it is through a lens of Husserl and Heidegger that he leads us to the conclusion that "This is the question of the meaning of being: not the ontology of the understanding of that particular verb, but the ethics of its justice...Not 'Why being rather than nothing?', but how being justifies itself."<sup>259</sup>

This is of course an interesting shift from Heidegger, who declares that "all ontology, no matter how rich and firmly compacted a system of categories it has at its disposal, remains blind and perverted from its outmost aim, if it has not first adequately clarified the meaning of Being, and conceived this clarification as its fundamental task".<sup>260</sup>

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<sup>257</sup> Emmanuel Lévinas, 'Ethics as First Philosophy', in *The Levinas Reader*, ed. by Seán Hand, Blackwell Readers (Oxford, UK ; Cambridge, MA, USA: B. Blackwell, 1989).

<sup>258</sup> Lévinas, 'Ethics as First Philosophy', p. 78.

<sup>259</sup> Lévinas, 'Ethics as First Philosophy', p. 86.

<sup>260</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 31.

Levinas would appear to suggest that, contrary to the primality of the meaning of Being, rather the more important question which must be taken as central is one which Heidegger would consider a step removed – that of *Da-Sein*'s relation to the Other. This step is one which should not be overlooked in its importance, as Levinas is consciously taking a step in moving first philosophy from the realm of the entirely theoretical (the question of being, the phenomenological approach, systems of logic and so on) to the realm of the practical, a precedent which shall be fully embraced in this thesis, even as we take another step in changing the manner in which first philosophy is to be understood.

## ¶2. *Performance is First Philosophy*

As has already been noted the essential theme which holds together these existing views as to what consists first philosophy is its logical primality. First philosophy to these thinkers is that single area of philosophical enquiry which we must approach first in order to create the foundation upon which we will build all other points of enquiry. It makes sense then that they should be the most fundamental aspects: logic, the rules that hold together all our arguments and which theoretically transcends our existence and subjective experience and metaphysics, the question of what it means for a thing to exist and the nature of that existence. We have seen also that, in the examples given, first philosophy has been for the most part highly theoretical, with the obvious exception of the more “practical” first philosophy of Levinas.

It would be trivial to remark that there can only be one true first philosophy, if indeed there is any, although we can certainly observe that to each philosopher his or her own view of first philosophy, when they choose to consciously acknowledge the existence of such a thing, does indeed take a primal position within their philosophical investigations. Taking this observation as a starting point we will make our first “step away”: we shall claim that exactly what it is that is taken as the single primal philosophical concept is of relevance largely only to the philosopher making the claim.

Instead, for our purposes, *first philosophy* shall be taken to be a different thing, a primality to that which is primal, which acts not as a single point of exploration which will act as a foundation for all other investigations, but rather as the thing which all different philosophical investigations hold in common. When I make the claim that *performance is first philosophy*, then, I do not intend to suggest that the primality of

performance is such that we must put forth a complete and total theory of performance, or that there is some sort of “question of performance” which must be answered prior to any other questions or around which philosophy need revolve, but rather that in approaching philosophy at all we approach it in a performative manner; that philosophy must be understood as one ritual, or collection of rituals, amongst others. From this perspective it will be understood that to say “metaphysics is first philosophy” or “logic is first philosophy” or “ethics is first philosophy” is itself a performance. The arguments used to back up such a claim are likewise a performance, and even the manner in which the argument is presented is a performance. Thus, when I say that performance is first philosophy, I make the claim that performance is that thing which is shared by all philosophies put forth no matter how disparate, contradictory, or opposed they may seem.

### ¶3. *Objections to Performance as First Philosophy*

The critic may at this point interject, that I am making a false claim as to what it is that constitutes first philosophy. Consider for instance at this point Robert Sokolowski’s assessment of the manner in which Plato, Aristotle, and Husserl engage in the same exercise:

*In order to venture out on this study, Husserl needs to differentiate his inquiry from something less ultimate, just as Aristotle did. But Husserl does not distinguish his first philosophy from the study of physical things; in his day and age he needs especially to distinguish it from psychology, so a book containing Husserl’s first philosophy could appropriately have been entitled *ta meta ta psychika* or the “Metapsychics.” And just to round out this set of comparisons, we might also observe that Plato too moved into a first philosophy by contrasting it against a less ultimate science, and in his case it is mathematics. Plato’s first philosophy could appropriately have been called something like *ta meta mathematika*, or the *Metamathematics*.<sup>261</sup>*

The study mentioned by Sokolowski is Husserl’s phenomenology, which he dubs “the study of truth as truth.”<sup>262</sup> In Sokolowski’s reading, the element that holds together the

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<sup>261</sup> Robert Sokolowski, ‘Husserl on First Philosophy’, in *Philosophy, Phenomenology, Sciences*, ed. by Filip Mattens, Hanne Jacobs, and Carlo Ierna (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2010), CC, 3–23 (p. 6) <[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-0071-0\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-0071-0_1)>.

<sup>262</sup> Sokolowski, CC, p. 6.

first philosophies of Plato, Aristotle, Husserl, and we may assume others, is that they are firstly scientific and secondly, that they attempt to explore the nature of the truth by contrasting the science of philosophy with the dominant (yet less ultimate) scientific field of the day. Such a reading might well invalidate such claims to first philosophy as that put forward by Levinas, as well as my own which is patently lacking in the rigorous definition and preciseness required of a science in this current day.

My response to this alternative view of first philosophy will be presented in three points. First, the view of first philosophy as an ultimate science. Certainly this is an interesting approach and is one that ties in with Husserl's attempts to view phenomenology in terms of a science opposed to psychology. However the greater question must be raised as to whether it is *necessary* or merely coincidental to the overall use of first philosophy. Aristotle's work was the *Metaphysics*, that which comes above or after physics, and it is certainly true that just as in his other works Aristotle approached the subject in a methodical manner, as much of a science as his *Physics* or indeed works such as the *Poetics*, *Rhetoric*, and so on. We may however risk overreaching here. The *Metaphysics* is so named because it was the book which came in the series of complete works after the *Physics*. Whilst Sokolowski is not incorrect to note that "the actual *Metaphysics* theorises truth; it is the *theoria tes aletheias*, and the human attainment of truth is an achievement that goes beyond any physical process"<sup>263</sup>, its position as a scientific text may be as much a product of the author's approach to all of the subjects he taught as much as anything else, and the direct opposition to the *Physics* through its very title is not an originally intended part of that.

Plato, likewise, is an author for whom we should be careful to avoid such leaps. Consider that there is much debate to be had as to the line between Plato's own arguments in his dialogues and those of Socrates, as well as consideration of the development of his own thought in his works. Consider also Plato's involvement with groups such as the Pythagoreans, whose religious devotion to mathematics may well have placed it far above the category of mere science. Indeed the near-religious elements found in Plato's work especially amongst such subjects as *the Forms* may well be said to imply that the simple setting up of one science against another is a misrepresentation of his actual work.

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<sup>263</sup> Sokolowski, CC, p. 6.

As our second objection, we shall question the value of viewing first philosophy as a quest for truth. In this case, it may be more helpful to simply accept Sokolowski as correct – it does seem that the three philosophers mentioned were interested in a quest for truth. However, as we have previously claimed several jumps in the understanding of first philosophy let us add in another: we shall jump from first philosophy as being grounded in the analysis of truth to its simply having a hand in understanding the truth of the manner in which philosophy occurs – by placing performance as first philosophy we do away with any definite single examination of a truthful foundation in favour of an acknowledgment that all philosophy is performed. In doing so do we also perhaps suggest that truth is not central? This would not be an entirely original concept (consider the idea that Spinoza's *Ethics*, a work which shall be discussed in more detail later in this chapter, exists primarily as a therapeutic text) but might well have value.

In the third objection, Sokolowski may still be seen to trouble us as with his suggestion that Aristotle and Husserl are engaging in the same activity, which contradicts our earlier assertion of a change in what is meant by first philosophy, from Aristotle's first philosophy as a specific field to Husserl's first philosophy as an indicator of that which is primal. This contradiction, however, only exists on the surface, for if we consider for a moment we shall realise that he is in fact simply doing without the need for such a leap – to Sokolowski, Aristotle's first philosophy is metaphysics whilst Husserl's is metapsychics. The distinction between first philosophy as a field and first philosophy as a label for a particular field is thus already implied. He has in effect already retroactively applied Husserl's leap. It is important however to note that this leap exists, as the move to performance as first philosophy should be seen as one leap in a series: the leap of Husserl of first philosophy from specific field to label for another field, of Levinas from theoretical to practical field, and now a third leap from specific field to wider phenomena linking a range of fields.

In summarising this section: the concept of *first philosophy* is one which can be seen to have changed its understanding over time. Beginning with Aristotle we see first philosophy to be first principles – those things which act as a foundation upon which other things which we can examine are built. It was not, however, necessarily a starting point of investigation – the referring to first philosophy as *metaphysics* being a potential suggestion that the first principles should be approached only after those things built upon the foundation have been taught. Moving forward Husserl makes a change to this

approach, which we may retroactively apply, transforming first philosophy from first principles into that which is primal, being the area of philosophy that must be understood and accepted before one may embark on explorations of other areas. Levinas gives us a second and vital leap, which keeps first philosophy as primal whilst suggesting that rather than an area of theory it is in fact a practical aspect of philosophical investigation. Finally, it is proposed that a third leap is made which recognises that first philosophy is primal, practical, but also unlike in previous models not one single primal area of investigation but rather a concept which overlaps with all philosophy and indeed all areas of human behaviour, which is performance. Thus our first philosophy shall be a first philosophy which can be seen even within whichever area a given thinker will take as their own first philosophy, even if it is not given conscious exploration.

In order to expand on the concept of performance as first philosophy we shall now explore the direct application of performance in Philosophy

## §2. Philosophy as it is Performed

### ¶4. *How is Philosophy Performed?*

What does it mean for philosophy to be performed? For one possible answer we shall return to JL Austin, looking this time not at his published work but rather at what we may deem his methodology and the claim put forth by Tawny Andersen that "in addition to producing an explicit theorization of the concept of performativity, Austin produced and disseminated his philosophy in a *performative manner*".<sup>264</sup> Andersen begins this claim by turning to the accounts by Austin's students on the gatherings held by Austin in Oxford "in order to discuss various problems in philosophy"<sup>265</sup>, which he apparently saw as "a co-operative pursuit"<sup>266</sup>. According to G.J. Warnock, who attended these meetings, "one had the feeling...that those meetings...were not occasions on which philosophy was talked about, or taught, or learned -they were occasions in

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<sup>264</sup> Tawny Andersen, "“Any Search for an Origin Is Hysterical”: Summoning the Ghost of J.L. Austin", *Performance Philosophy*, 2.2 (2017), 189 (p. 193) <<https://doi.org/10.21476/PP.2017.22102>>.

<sup>265</sup> Andersen, p. 193.

<sup>266</sup> Andersen, p. 193.

which it was *done*, at which that actually *happened*".<sup>267</sup> Andersen claims that this indicated that "in 'doing' the philosophy he was describing, Austin was enacting his own, original sense of the term performative... in articulating his ideas *about* philosophy, he was simultaneously *enacting* them"<sup>268</sup> and that further, the descriptions given by the attendees of the sessions give us "a glimpse of Austin *performing* philosophy as a social act."<sup>269</sup>

As we have previously noted, the concept of performativity requires that for a speech act to be successful requires the performer to have authority – the wedding ceremony is illegitimate without the priest having the authority to legally declare the couple to be married, naming a boat is illegitimate unless the person doing the naming has the authority to do so – and it would appear from the writings of those attendees who drew attention to the air of authority which surrounded Austin such that "the physical and dialectical centre of gravity located itself, predictably, in the person of Austin".<sup>270</sup>

Austin's philosophy, then, in the context of those group discussions seems to have been performed - a ritual which *makes* philosophy, with Austin as the focal lead point of the ritual and the group members in supporting roles, both spectator and actor within the performance. It is interesting to note that this approach is very different to the broader claims about the discipline's being based on an unsupportive antagonism, made by Heath: although antagonism may well be commonplace today, it is by no means something which is essential or necessary.

If Austin's discussion groups were performed, Andersen encourages us to believe that so too were his written works:

*The text unfolds in the temporality of the now. Austin leads his readers through a series of methodological steps, often working by the process of exclusion in order to push an idea to its limits. We observe the philosopher thinking in the present tense, and we think alongside him*

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<sup>267</sup> G.J Warnock, J.L Austin, New York:Routledge(1989) p.45 cited in Andersen, p. 193.

<sup>268</sup> Andersen, p. 193.

<sup>269</sup> Andersen, p. 194.

<sup>270</sup> George Pitcher, 'Austin: A personal memoir' in Essays on J.L. Austin ed. By Isaiah Berlin, Oxford:Clarendon Press(1973), p.21 cited in Andersen, p. 194.



*in real time. Throughout the exposition of his ideas, Austin repeatedly confronts impasses. We, as his readers, become spectators to the dramatization of both the construction of his ideas and their breakdown...since Austin had already worked through these logical processes before the lectures were given, he clearly chose to restage them for his audience.*<sup>271</sup>

A short consideration will lead us to conclude that a performative written work of this sort is not unique to Austin: Andersen remarks that "J. Hillis Miller calls attention to the fact that Austin's work is situated within a strong philosophical tradition, reminding us that Plato's *Dialogues* also continually end at impasses in which Socrates proposed that they must take up the subject again at a later time"<sup>272</sup> but other writers can also be seen to match this description.

Consider for example Descartes, who whilst attempting to give definitive answers to the questions he studies, can certainly be said to present a text in which, as Andersen says: "we observe the philosopher thinking in the present tense, and we think alongside him in real time". The *Mediations* follow a simple pattern in which Descartes talks us through his thought processes as he attempts "to rid [himself] of all of all the opinions [he] had adopted up to then, and to begin afresh from the foundations."<sup>273</sup> Through the course of these meditations Descartes traces exactly the method of doubt used to question everything that would be held as self-evident – the reliability of the senses, the nature of mathematics, and so on until through an exercise in extreme scepticism he is left with the infamous conclusion that the only thing he can be sure about is his own existence.

Similarly, Descartes proceeds to build anew a metaphysical system which allows for a new confidence in commonly held beliefs such as those he had previously doubted, based upon what he demonstrates through his working to be logical and sensible foundations. Although it is questionable whether he succeeds in the endeavour – in particular one might criticize his insistence on the existence of God to justify a belief in the trustworthiness of the senses, especially given the nature of the arguments for said existence – there is a clear pattern of working ongoing: throughout each of his

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<sup>271</sup> Andersen, pp. 196–97.

<sup>272</sup> Andersen, p. 197.

<sup>273</sup> Rene Descartes, "Discourse on Method and The Meditations", London: Penguin Classics(1968) p.95

meditations Descartes explains in detail his thought process, slowly working through each idea to come to what is seen to be a natural conclusion.

We might then argue that philosophy, when it is done through a text rather than merely described, follows this pattern: both Austin and Descartes present their work in a manner which causes us to reason alongside them, to follow precisely a train of thought to its conclusion, such that with the conclusion comes, theoretically, a practical understanding.

Consider, however, Spinoza's *Ethics*, a work written not in a format promoting a dramatization of ideas, but rather through the “geometrical order”. Borrowing from the mathematical writings of Euclid, Spinoza attempts to present his metaphysical system using, rather than the classical philosophical essay, a method in which, essentially, an argument is presented not by working through the thought process but instead by beginning with simple definitions and axioms which are taken to be self-evident and from there offering propositions and proofs which are seen to logically follow from said basic components. There will be no necessity for a working through in the Cartesian sense, as the method being employed is one which on the surface assumes that mistakes cannot be made. Indeed the reader might be tempted to think that the method is a detriment – for example Aaron V. Garrett suggests that his hypothetical reader may view the text as “an exemplar of a sort of philosophical formalism that places validity of argument far above the needs of the reader...a philosophy bound by the laws of mathematical deduction.”<sup>274</sup>

This is of course only half of the story – like Austin, Spinoza’s major work was posthumously published. Edwin Curley notes however that “his work did circulate in manuscript form before it was published and received some very illuminating criticism from a young German nobleman, Ehrenfried Walther von Tschirnhaus, who carried on an extended correspondence with Spinoza, sometimes through their mutual friend, George Hermann Schuller.”<sup>275</sup> Is it perhaps the case that it is in this correspondence that Spinoza’s philosophy is in fact “done”? We shall consider then two possibilities: that Spinoza does philosophy through his method, similarly and yet differently to the

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<sup>274</sup> Aaron Garrett, *Meaning in Spinoza’s Method* (Cambridge, U.K. ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 7.

<sup>275</sup> Translator’s introduction to Benedict Spinoza tr. By Edwin Curley, “A Spinoza Reader”, New Jersey: Princeton university Press(1994),p.xxxiii

manner in which philosophy is done by Descartes or Austin, or that instead philosophy's "method", if it may be called such, is simply a reporting of philosophy that was done through private correspondence, comparable perhaps to Austin's discussion groups. We shall begin by considering the latter.

One may begin by claiming that the geometrical method has a precedent as a "mere" reportage in a work published during Spinoza's life, the *Principles of Cartesian Philosophy*.<sup>276</sup> The *Principles* consists of an application of the geometric method to Descartes' *Principles of Philosophy*, itself adapted from the *Meditations* and *Discourse on Method*. It is not, we might argue, an original work of philosophy so much as it is the taking of a work and clarifying it: a commentary through paraphrase, useful to clarify to the student of Descartes the points made when read alongside the original text. Likewise then *The Ethics*, we may argue, can be seen similarly: it represents a finished product, a report of ideas previously had, and, as it lacks a rigorous demonstration of thought process complete with wrong turnings and evolutions of thought when a previously held idea was proven fallacious or incomplete, it does not in itself aid understanding. This reading is not without precedent – Garrett observes that "some interpreters of Spinoza consider the [geometric method] to be primarily a teaching method used to dress up ideas acquired in some way independent of their geometrical presentation"<sup>277</sup> and indeed that:

*there are very good reasons to interpret the geometrical method this way. Spinoza wrote the Principles of Descartes' Philosophy to present Descartes' works to a student not capable of fully grasping the ideas of the ethics...hence one of the functions of the Principles of Descartes' Philosophy is to present previously discovered results...in accessible dress. As this is the function of the [geometrical method] in Spinoza's Principles, it is likely also a function of the method in the Ethics.*<sup>278</sup>

If we are to follow this line of thought we may ultimately conclude that goal of the *Ethics* is a reportage of ideas and not an independent source of the understanding through thought process of those ideas.

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<sup>276</sup> Spinoza tr. By Samuel Shirley, "Principles of Cartesian Philosophy with Metaphysical Thoughts", Hackett(1998)

<sup>277</sup> Garrett, p. 99.

<sup>278</sup> Garrett, p. 99.

Rather the fuller understanding is understood in the context of the letters – for lacking the ability to converse with Spinoza himself directly we must rely instead on his responses to his critics. It is through seeing objections raised or clarifications requested, the manner in which Spinoza responded to them, and in some cases the examples of suggestions which came to be reflected in the final work, that a glimpse into the thought process going on behind the work was gained, and so likewise access is granted to a possibility of understanding.

In contrast, we may note that, although it may have been spawned as a learning aid, Spinoza's *Principles* is not merely a straight conversion to the geometric method: in places Spinoza will directly present Descartes' definitions and axioms, in others he "either expands or supplements"<sup>279</sup> them. The geometric method, then, in this case might be seen to add to the conversation, "doing" philosophy by not simply presenting Descartes' arguments but presenting them in a manner which does not merely complement but rather enhances them, placing them in a new light and a new context.

Although the work is not written in a manner in which we follow through a dramatization of ideas being formed and considered, the "geometrical order" presentation of the work results in the reader being carried through each and every logical step in the author's thought process, designed in such a way that, in agreeing to the relatively innocuous early definitions and premises, the reader will have little choice but to agree with the ultimate conclusions. Further, why should the reader not accept the initial definitions? In defining *substance* as "what is in itself and is conceived through itself"<sup>280</sup> and *attribute* as "what the intellect perceives of a substance, as constituting its essence"<sup>281</sup> he remains firmly within common-sense Cartesian principles which might at the time have been readily accepted by his readers.

The *Ethics* is not the *Meditations*, however, in more ways than simply the method of laying out the arguments. Spinoza was openly critical of Descartes, and his drawing upon Cartesian principles to reach entirely new and different conclusions may be seen

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<sup>279</sup> Steven Barbone and Lee Rice, introduction to Spinoza, *Principles* p.xxi

<sup>280</sup> Benedictus de Spinoza, E. M. Curley, and Benedictus de Spinoza, 'The Ethics', in *A Spinoza Reader: The Ethics and Other Works* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1994).

<sup>281</sup> Spinoza, Curley, and Spinoza, p. 85.

as a cunning method of critiquing what he viewed as subpar ideas. Things may be muddied even further when we take on board Garrett's suggestion that the specific goal of the *Ethics* is to be transformative of the reader: "Spinoza's philosophy is kind of self-clarification therapy for those capable of self-clarification"<sup>282</sup> with self-clarification being here seen as a manner in which the clarifying of philosophical problems in general results in an improvement to the mental clarification of the individual. He notes that this reading follows within the general philosophical practice of the time. That "many of the best-known philosophers prior to the twentieth century were not primarily interested in providing ingenious arguments in response to outstanding problems or questions, but wanted to change readers, dialogue partners, or listeners, or to allow them to change themselves, in such a way that they might become happier and wiser."<sup>283</sup> Spinoza in this reading may be seen to be simply following in the tradition of Socrates, the gadfly of Athens who would attempt to improve the minds of his dialogue partners through challenging those things they thought uncritically to be true. In interpreting the *Ethics* in this way we see a very clear laying forth of the answers to the biggest problems in philosophy – the nature of metaphysics, the correct way to live one's life, and so on.

Further, there is an issue here of what we may dub *first philosophy*. Descartes' *Meditations* of course were in first philosophy, but what is his first philosophy? Certainly it is not logic, for the *Meditations* begin with its undermining, and likewise ethics makes no appearance. Rather Descartes' first philosophy is metaphysics – it is upon, not logic but rather his own existence and that of God that he is able to create a foundation for further thought. Spinoza, meanwhile, does not take metaphysics to be first philosophy – although it is the primary subject of the *Ethics* and is the core focus of the initial chapters- rather the putting forward of his arguments are made on an assumption of the concrete trustworthiness of the logic which Descartes places such scepticism towards. Thus it is that we see why the *Mediations* cannot be in the geometrical method whilst the *Ethics* cannot truly be written in the narrative form of the armchair philosopher: each thinker takes as first philosophy what the other sees as secondary, and vice versa.

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<sup>282</sup> Garrett, p. 7.

<sup>283</sup> Garrett, pp. 6–7.

Andersen, it should be noted, would seem to disagree that too much of a similarity can be drawn between these thinkers and Austin: "despite his dogged pursuit of clarity, Austin clearly avoided traditional, formal, and logical structure. One could say that he never arrives at propounding an argument, per se, ending his lecture..."by offering to his readers 'the real fun of applying it in philosophy'(Austin 1975,164)"<sup>284</sup>. She further argues that Austin's ideas were developed over a long period of time, being refined over the course of multiple lectures, "each communication...like a public performance of a work in progress"<sup>285</sup> and that even when the work was finally published, posthumously, "its final published form owes everything to its editors; the text we have today, in which we situate the origin of performativity, is in fact a highly hybrid object."<sup>286</sup>

A hybrid object maybe, and yet there are important points which, I would argue, link the texts under scrutiny in such a way that minimises the problem that Austin's work might be distinguishable by a lack of philosophical rigour which the others may lay claim to. The most important of these is the previously mentioned issue of authority, and perhaps it is this which all philosophical works have in common in terms of their performance.

It is generally accepted that it is a fallacy to argue that a particular argument gains its validity or truthfulness purely from having been made by someone who is perceived to be an authority. However in practice in choosing to approach an argument at all, either to agree or to rebut, we implicitly allow that the author has an authority of some sort - indeed it may seem that such authority is implicit in the language being used: author and authority are not merely similar words but both rooted in the Latin *augere*, to originate or promote - which is the authority to put forward (promote) their point of view – indeed to reject an argument out of hand may be to reject that authority, and to deny any validity to the performance of the argument. Consider Jennifer Hornsby's claim that "a group that is said to be 'silenced'...is one whose members may be thought of as incapacitated as fully successful doers of some [speech] acts."<sup>287</sup> Hornsby argues that if a speech act such as a refusal of consent is ignored, then the individual has been

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<sup>284</sup> Andersen p.197

<sup>285</sup> *ibid.* P.198

<sup>286</sup> *ibid*

<sup>287</sup> Jennifer Hornsby, 'Illocution and Its Significance', in *Foundations of Speech Act Theory: Philosophical and Linguistic Perspectives*, ed. by Savas L. Tsohatzidis (London ; New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 200.

effectively silenced such that the proposed act was not merely ignored but in fact did not take place

Similarly we might argue that by the denial of authority to the one putting forward a philosophical argument, we cause them to be silenced such that no argument has been made – rather than “doing philosophy” they have been reduced to a dead performance of discussion.<sup>288</sup>

Are there multiple forms of authority at work here? To make an argument may imply the authority of promotion, but can we separate that from authority of origination? By making a distinction we draw a stark distinction between *doing* philosophy and merely *discussing* philosophy. Under this paradigm the doing of philosophy involves the originating of ideas through ritual. As these rituals are in some way performed by a group, with the *authority* as the central figure who directs and helps control the new ideas as they are disseminated to the other participants - it is a pedagogical exercise, with both types of authority resting in the lead figure(s). This philosophy that is *done* is distinct from the philosophy which has only *promotion authority*, which is philosophy that is not *done* but rather simply discussed. It is a dry and theoretical philosophy which does little to create in the participants new ideas, and yet it is still a ritual: a ritual of confirmation or reinforcement perhaps, rather than a ritual of creation or (re)definition. It is the philosophy which is *done*, which carries with it both forms of authority and which is, in some sense, alive that is of interest to this chapter.

It is from here that I make the following crucial claim, that shall occupy the remainder of the thesis and that is central to the entire text: that what links Austin, Descartes, and Spinoza in their very distinctly different methods of presentation, and which also links them to all other thinkers when they actively “do” philosophy, is a shared first philosophy. Although it may seem that Descartes gave primacy to metaphysics, that Spinoza gave it to logic, in fact it is performance that is first philosophy.

## ¶5. Writing

I have suggested that the presentation, or in other words the methodology of an argument may be as important as the argument itself: that the reader may be more

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<sup>288</sup> A more full discussion of the difference between live and dead philosophy shall follow shortly.

influenced not by what they read but by how it is written. To gain a fuller understanding of this we should ask the question, what is it to write? To ask this question of course implies that writing has some “essence” that we can examine, but is this the case? To understand the essence, if it exists, of writing we might look to writers for an answer. Such an approach may be understood as an extension of the phenomenological method: the *writer* is one whose primary activity is the act of writing, and so their comments on their vocation will be, in principal, an introspective analysis which will allow an insight more considered or in-depth than one to whom writing is a peripheral or incidental activity. George Orwell, for instance in his essay *Why I write* observes that “From a very early age...I knew that when I grew up I should be a writer. Between the ages of seventeen and twenty-four I tried to abandon this idea, but I did so with the consciousness that I was outraging my true nature and that sooner or later I should have to settle down and write books.”<sup>289</sup>

With a lifetime of experience as one destined to be a writer, he claims that there are “four great motives for writing, at any rate for writing prose”<sup>290</sup> and that these motives are “sheer egoism”, “aesthetic enthusiasm”, “historical impulse”, and “political purpose.”<sup>291</sup> It is perhaps not coincidental that although the bulk of the essay is dedicated to the political purpose in his own work, Orwell dedicates more time to explaining the role of egoism than to the other three motives. Historical impulse (the “desire to see things as they are, to find out true facts and store them up for the use of posterity”<sup>292</sup>), meanwhile, is relegated to a mere sentence. The role of aesthetic enthusiasm is perhaps one which is of value to us: “the aesthetic motive is very feeble in a lot of writers”<sup>293</sup>, we are told, but yet “even a pamphleteer or writer of textbooks will have pet words and phrases which appeal to him for non-utilitarian reasons; or he may feel strongly about typography, width of margins, etc. Above the level of a railway guide, no book is quite free from aesthetic considerations”<sup>294</sup>. This is a point to return to later: is word choice within writing a significant form of ritual?

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<sup>289</sup> George Orwell, ‘Why I Write’ <[http://orwell.ru/library/essays/wiw/english/e\\_wiw](http://orwell.ru/library/essays/wiw/english/e_wiw)> [accessed 13 October 2017].

<sup>290</sup> Orwell.

<sup>291</sup> Orwell.

<sup>292</sup> Orwell.

<sup>293</sup> Orwell.

<sup>294</sup> Orwell.



The bulk of the essay is taken up by Orwell's declaration that in his writing the primary motivation is politics: "Every line of serious work that I have written since 1936 has been written, directly or indirectly, *against* totalitarianism and *for* democratic socialism, as I understand it. It seems to me nonsense, in a period like our own, to think that one can avoid writing of such subjects. Everyone writes of them in one guise or another. It is simply a question of which side one takes and what approach one follows."<sup>295</sup> He also notes however that this concentration is a product of his time and circumstances rather than natural proclivity and that "In a peaceful age I might have written ornate or merely descriptive books, and might have remained almost unaware of my political loyalties. As it is I have been forced into becoming a sort of pamphleteer."<sup>296</sup> We might question whether this point is a tacit acknowledgment that his true primary motive is in fact that which he listed first – indeed in writing an essay entitled *Why I Write* the author places the *I* in a central position both figuratively and literally. The title, and indeed the concept are an exhibition of egoism. Thus when Orwell declares that "all writers are vain, selfish, and lazy"<sup>297</sup> we can easily be tempted to see his words as a projection of his own experience on to all other writers. Nonetheless, as we shall see, there is some truth here.

While Orwell theorises on the deeper motives of the writing process, Stephen King states that "most books about writing are filled with bullshit"<sup>298</sup> and that "fiction writers – present company included – don't understand very much about what they do – not why it works when it's good, not why it doesn't when it's bad."<sup>299</sup> King's use of *bullshit* is interesting – the word is one which is notoriously one which we hear used on a regular basis but which most might find difficulty in defining. Perhaps the best interpretation is given, and one which is valuable here, is in Frankfurt's *On Bullshit*, in which bullshit is seen to be a form of misrepresentation, regarding "neither the state of the affairs to which it refers nor the beliefs of the speaker concerning that state of affairs"<sup>300</sup> but rather "what [the bullshitter] is up to"<sup>301</sup>. Frankfurt contends that "the fact about himself that the bullshitter hides...is that the truth-values of his statements are of

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<sup>295</sup> Orwell.

<sup>296</sup> Orwell.

<sup>297</sup> Orwell.

<sup>298</sup> Stephen King, *On Writing* (London: New English Library, 2001), p. xiii.

<sup>299</sup> King, p. xiii.

<sup>300</sup> Harry G. Frankfurt, *On Bullshit* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), p. 53.

<sup>301</sup> Frankfurt, p. 54.

no central interest to him...he does not care whether the things he says describe reality correctly. He just picks them out, or makes them up, to suit his purpose.”<sup>302</sup> Perhaps most pertinently to King’s statement, Frankfurt notes that “bullshit is unavoidable whenever circumstances require someone to talk without knowing what he is talking about”<sup>303</sup> – exactly the situation conjured by the claim that most writers lack an understanding of writing.

This raises a potential problem of course: if fiction writers are predisposed to bullshit when discussing writing, why should writers of non-fiction necessarily be immune? Orwell’s introspective analysis may well contain truth, but also an element of ideas which exist as much to serve his egoist purpose of sharing that self-analysis with his public. Does this study of writing also risk falling into the trap of being mostly bullshit? The answer is that such a risk does exist and that we must be aware of it. However it may (hopefully) be avoided, or at least mitigated, by maintaining throughout an awareness that this is not an attempt per se to answer a question of what it is to write, but rather to frame the exercise of writing within the wider context of performance in its role as first philosophy.

King goes on to declare that writing is “telepathy, of course!”<sup>304</sup> Placing the writer in the role of transmitter and the reader as receiver, he asks us to “assume that you’re in your favourite receiving place just as I am in the place where I do my best transmitting. We’ll have to perform our mentalist routine not just over distance but over time as well, yet that prevents no real problem; if we can still read Dickens, Shakespeare, and (with the help of a foot note or two) Herodotus, I think we can manage the gap between 1997 and 2000.” Two effects are immediately achieved here: firstly that reading and writing are set up as two roles in the same activity, with the one being dependent upon the other to find meaning, and secondly a setup has apparently been created for the demonstration that is to follow, although as shall be seen the setup may be seen as part of the demonstration.

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<sup>302</sup> Frankfurt, pp. 54–57.

<sup>303</sup> Frankfurt, p. 63.

<sup>304</sup> King, p. 113.

King moves on to the overt demonstration. He describes a scene involving a rabbit in a cage and observes that although the details may be different the reader will still visualise the essential details: “we’re having a meeting of minds.”<sup>305</sup> This meeting of minds may be of value: let us turn to Wittgenstein. In his discussion of reading in the *Philosophical Investigations* he presents us with some invented symbols. Concentrating on one particular symbol, “i” which, due to its lack of availability on a word processor, will be replaced in this context with the equally arbitrary 𐀀. He proposes that we “compare an individual letter with such a squiggle...it does of course make a difference whether I say “i” when I see “i” or when I see “𐀀”. The difference is, roughly, that when I see the letter, it’s automatic for me inwardly to hear the sound “i”, even against my will, and that I pronounce the letter with less effort when I read it than when I am looking at “𐀀”.<sup>306</sup>

This observation would seem to tie in to King’s: just as it is the case that seeing a letter will bring to mind the sound with which we have been trained to associate it, and likewise the combination of letters will form words, so on a more abstracted scale the putting of those symbols into particular orders to describe a scene can cause an image to be brought forth into mind – of course as demonstrated by the discussion of “𐀀”, the symbols themselves are somewhat arbitrary – the letters used in the writing of this thesis for instance are largely used by the chance of my first language being one which uses the Latin alphabet and in another place could as easily be Cyrillic, Arabic, Kanji, etc.

Considering this relative arbitrariness of letter systems, and with the telepathy illustration which provides an interesting model for consideration, should we perhaps place reading and writing as two sides of the same coin, with the one being pointless without the existence of the other? Are there multiple categories of writing to consider? We might categorise them first as those writings which are for the benefit of the writer and those which are written with another audience in mind. For the latter there are those

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<sup>305</sup> King, p. 117.

<sup>306</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein and Joachim Schulte, *Philosophische Untersuchungen =: Philosophical investigations*, trans. by G. E. M. Anscombe and P. M. S. Hacker, Rev. 4th ed (Chichester, West Sussex, U.K. ; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), p. 75.

writings which are to be read and those which are to be performed in another manner<sup>307</sup>. Within this there may also be progressions. Consider the diary, which will often exist in multiple forms: the author's original writings, often a collection of thoughts written largely for their own benefit (although in some cases an intention to publish may be there from the start), the author's second version revised and edited with publication in mind, the editor's version, and finally many years later an edition containing all three published together for scholars.

This brings us back to a previous observation: the role of word-choice. Orwell has observed that word choice may come from a sense of aesthetic appreciation but let us suggest that further, the choice of aesthetic is a ritual which, just as with the choice of subject, theme, or a different behaviour entirely, acts to question or empathise identity and, in the case of the meeting-of-minds ritual of writing, may play a role in demonstrating with the reader some form of shared or opposed identity. Alternatively could it be that there is what we may deem a bullshit-ritual, which intends to demonstrate a shared identity which does not exist, and in doing so is in fact a ritual of determining oneself to be a bullshitter?

I will now indulge in a light form of self-psychoanalysis in an attempt to further draw out these distinctions. Consider first this piece of text: as with any other academic text intended to be read by another, the process of crafting it is slow and drawn out, with constant backspacing and rewriting of passages that do not scan well or that went off on an unwanted chain of thought. As much time is potentially spent on the consideration of what to write as on the actual writing. The writing style tends towards being conversational-yet-academic, with technical terms and esoteric concepts used with an assumption that the reader has a certain level of familiarity with the field. For a contrast we might turn to the travel diary which accompanies me wherever I go: a cheap-looking, thin brown leather cover into the spine of which are attached elastic ties which hold in place three thin Moleskine notebooks with cardboard covers (does the choice of Moleskin, a brand which markets itself as having a direct association with Van Gogh and Hemingway, act as a ritual itself?)

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<sup>307</sup> An interesting point arises: are those texts written to be read aloud classed amongst those to be read, or those to be performed? Already we see that these rough categories are guidelines rather than absolutes. Indeed it might seem that to perform still requires to read, and thus perhaps the wording here is unsatisfactory.

The left-most of these notebooks is a so-called “bullet journal”, with most pages a list of dates with daily tasks (as well as the scores for baseball games played by the Philadelphia Phillies...) written in. Although an occasional page will contain some other jotted content (a brief design for a board game, a recipe for masala chai). Each morning I carry out the daily ritual of copying the day’s tasks from my academic planner, and they are short and to the point – the intention being to make a note of what has been done, rather than to be of any particular interest.

The middle notebook is used for academic work and contains a mixture of content. Primarily, there are rough drafts of paragraphs which I have written out by hand before typing them up, as a way to collect thoughts in a manner allowing for more thought and less room to endlessly delete and retype than using a word processor allows. These sections are written to be read, and genuinely are almost identical to the final versions which end up on the page. Secondly there will be quotes from books, written out verbatim along with a page reference. These will genuinely be written out whilst reading a work either for research or occasionally for pleasure. Thirdly there are notes taken during presentations – these are often memory aids which are not intended for reading by anyone other than myself and resultantly are often clipped and of little value without context (“Identity politics lost sight of class”, “the avant-garde comes from the dictatorship of the proletariat”, “Kafka once arranged a hook-up using ‘sign language’”).

Standing out within the notebook is what might be described as a diary entry, marked June 26<sup>th</sup> 10:47 AM, describing my thoughts whilst standing at the grave of Franz Kafka at the New Jewish Cemetery in Prague. Written over two and a half pages, the language used is simplistic and down to earth, in a personal first-person style and contains both empirical observation and reflections on my own thoughts at visiting the final resting place of a favourite writer. What is its purpose? It is certainly out of place in the notebook and would have perhaps made more sense placed on a page in the bullet journal. At the time of writing there was certainly a thought of the possibility that it might find its way onto a page intended for dissemination, and it is perhaps under that understanding that it found its way to accompany rough chapter drafts and research notes.

Notebook number three is a comedy notebook, used to jot down potential jokes for standup routines. Most of the notes are even more cryptic than those in the second notebook (“Bunking off to do sight-seeing during conferences”, “Philosophical tools – what are they? Not Brian Leiter!”, “Academic guilt”), being intended often to spark an idea as much as anything, whereas in other cases there are short paragraphs sketching out the basics of a joke, or a section of a routine. Whether or not a joke is fleshed out on paper or not there will generally not be a full writing down of the final version, which is created through a spoken process of repetition and experimentation and memorised as it is written/rehearsed.

We see above three different writings, separated handily into categories by their being in three different books. The three have similarities – all three contain notes intended for an audience of one and which are naturally cryptic and unuseful – but also differences marked down specifically by their intended use and target audience. The differences may yet highlight a commonality in the rituals of writing, however: consider for instance that the academic and comedic notebooks both contain both scribbled notes and longer extracts which form the basis of a final written product. In both cases what is written is evolved -in the former case through rewriting and redrafting, and in the latter through repetition and rehearsal. Further, academic work can also find its way into a spoken presentation form, as for instance in a conference presentation. Although the methodology will be different, there is still much similarity: the presentation will be worked through on paper through writing, rewriting, and memorisation/rehearsal rather than through a largely oral development, perhaps, but still there can be seen a root process.

What is the significance of this excursion into writing? Methodology and writing would seem to be heavily intertwined, but as we have seen this means much more than simply a style of writing or a procedure. Writing, Orwell suggests, carries with it motive. It is also, as Orwell and King both seem to agree, to some extent a performance (either in terms of aiming for an aesthetic quality, or in the nature of what it is that the process of writing/reading does). This performance is one which, as King suggests, may be intertwined with the "performance" of reading – even if the only reader is the original writer, still writing is a transmission of ideas, and reading a reception of the same.

An important factor in this analysis has been that in the case of both Orwell and King, the opinions put forth were as part of an introspection into their own writing. By

embarking in a similar manner upon an examination of my own writing process I have revealed, if not an exact insight into my methodology or the manner in which the style and format of this thesis serves to act in a manner similar to those I have ascribed to others, certainly a view of some of the everyday rituals which the behaviours around my own writing process enact. This serves to complete a pattern: Orwell offers insight into the why of writing, King gives a performative illustration of the what, but the question of how – the methods around writing – are surely ones which will not be universal. To analyse one's own writing, then, is surely of more interest than to simply ruminate on the self-analysis of an Other. The individual writer will have their own set of rituals, choice of notebooks or writing implements, points of aesthetic interest, and so on. What will be common amongst all these things is the existence of rituals. The writer is a ritualist, and their rituals will all have potential, in some manner, to feed into the final performance transmitted to the reader.

By understanding writing/reading as a linked ritual we should find ourselves able to further understand exactly what is going on when a particular writing methodology is used, in terms of its performance, and so from there we should be able to apply the principles gleaned to new methodologies in line with our proposed claims of the ability to create a ritual which will allow an argument to be approached on merit.

#### ¶6. *Implicit Bias*

It is a point of almost universal acceptance amongst philosophers of a certain kind that the answers to many questions may be found logically. Consider the statement by Quine that “Logic... has its business in the pursuit of truth. What are true are certain statements; and the pursuit of truth is the endeavour to sort out the true statements from the other, which are false”.<sup>308</sup> The pursuit of truth as simply the separating of true statements from false seems a fairly simple one, and we will not even find cause to disagree, on the face of it, when he goes on to declare that “All that counts, when a statement is logically true, is its structure in terms of logical words. Thus it is that logical truths are commonly said to be true by virtue merely of the meanings of the logical words.”<sup>309</sup> Such sentiments are found even in less complex texts, such as

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<sup>308</sup> Willard Van Orman Quine, *Methods of Logic* (London: Routledge, 1962), p. xi.

<sup>309</sup> Quine.

introductory textbooks: “A valid deductive argument is an argument in which it is impossible for the conclusion to be false given that the premises are true.”<sup>310</sup>

The implication in such statements is that the place of first philosophy is taken by logic – we need simply find the statements about the world that are deductively valid and therefore true, and we will have the groundings of reality. However, we may easily see the flaw in this approach when applying it to the real world: the fact that so many different viewpoints, opinions, philosophies exist offers us the observation that logical validity is not all that is required to convince one of a viewpoint. We shall suggest then that there are several factors, which shall be explored shortly, that get in the way of rational discussion. We shall refer to them as implicit biases, and we shall situate them as being in several groups – firstly those which are related to the person making the argument, the circumstances in which it is presented, and so on (which we shall call external factors) and secondly those related to the person who is receiving the argument, which include emotional factors, spiritual factors, and factors involving the degree of difference between accepted beliefs and those that are being presented (which we shall dub internal factors). After examining these factors, we shall attempt to suggest a manner in which, by placing performance as primal within philosophy, we can find methods in which to mitigate them based in part on an understanding of emotions/existential moods based on the writings of Martin Heidegger.

An implicit bias may be defined in several different yet essentially similar ways, such as “a term of art referring to relatively unconscious and relatively automatic features of prejudiced judgment and social behaviour”<sup>311</sup>, “the bias in judgment and/or behaviour that results from subtle cognitive processes (e.g., implicit attitudes and implicit stereotypes) that often operate at a level below conscious awareness and without intentional control”<sup>312</sup>, or “the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner.”<sup>313</sup> In essence an implicit bias then is

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<sup>310</sup> Patrick J. Hurley, *A Concise Introduction to Logic*, 8th ed (Australia ; Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2003), p. 41.

<sup>311</sup> Michael Brownstein, ‘Implicit Bias’, in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. by Edward N. Zalta, Spring 2017 (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2017) <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2017/entries/implicit-bias/>> [accessed 4 April 2017].

<sup>312</sup> ‘Implicit Bias FAQs Rev.Pdf’

<<http://www.ncsc.org/~media/Files/PDF/Topics/Gender%20and%20Racial%20Fairness/Implicit%20Bias%20FAQs%20rev.ashx>> [accessed 4 April 2017].

<sup>313</sup> ‘Understanding Implicit Bias’ <<http://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/research/understanding-implicit-bias/>> [accessed 4 April 2017].



a form of discriminatory attitude which happens at a level below that of conscious belief: for example an individual may be essentially egalitarian, believing in full gender equality and yet at an unconscious level associate women as less capable of certain forms of work or activities, thus resulting in an unrealised automatic discrimination such as taking the same work less seriously if it is undertaken by a woman than by a man, even with identical outcomes.

#### ¶7. *External Factors*

A practical example in action on a more subtle scale may be the previously discussed example of the Trump-Clinton political debates which were re-enacted with the participants' genders switched in a production arranged by New York academics (see Chapter 4). That an audience predisposed to see Donald Trump's debate performance as decidedly lacking would find that the identical performance was exceedingly convincing when coming from a woman raises a variety of questions, most obviously the nature of the biases that exist on gendered grounds but perhaps also on the nature of biases coming from knowledge of the presenter: to what extent can the change in response be said to come not from the change in gender but rather the change entirely in presenter? Do Trump's arguments seem more convincing when coming from a woman, or is it rather the case that the viewer who is familiar with Trump's behaviour prior to the debate will allow that behaviour on a subconscious level to interfere with the manner in which the debate performance was received? Likewise is it the case that Hillary Clinton's performance seems less effective coming from a man, or is it that receipt of the argument would be affected by factors such as her reputation from her ongoing political career and previous role as First Lady, by her having been the first female Presidential nominee from a major party, and so on?

This raising of questions leads to a further point which is of great importance to the later parts of this chapter. Consider the case of Martin Heidegger, a philosopher who famously was not merely a member of the Nazi party but an enthusiastic supporter who never publicly repented. Whilst always a controversial figure, the debate over Heidegger's value was recently reopened with the publication of the so-called "Black Notebooks", in which it is alleged that proof exists that Heidegger's philosophy cannot be separated from his politics, and that a level of extreme antisemitism can be found. To an individual so predisposed to such a viewpoint, will my use of Heidegger as a basis for a model of emotion risk being found intolerable? And if so is there the possibility

that such an individual might then decide, even if at a subconscious level, that the work cannot be taken seriously or should be treated to a less charitable reading than is deserved? Such questions should be extended outwards to other philosophical works as a whole: do implicit biases result in Heidegger being treated unsympathetically? What of other philosophers? Perhaps the most obvious application is in the alleged division between “analytic” and “continental” philosophy – do thinkers who align themselves to one or the other side of the divide risk approaching thinkers of the other with uncharitable biases?

Likewise biases may exist due to factors immediate during the presentation of the argument: consider for example, if one were to attend a presentation of a paper at a major event held at a prestigious academic institution and the presenter arrives late wearing an Adidas tracksuit and Burberry tartan baseball cap as well as having an obscene word written on their forehead. An extreme and unlikely example perhaps, but it is probable that in seeing the speaker to be such an exact match to the stereotype of the undereducated working class teenage thug members of the audience may become predisposed to viewing the paper through a lens of being presented by just such an individual. The use of this example in itself may even be fraught with issue – does discussing the negative implications behind such a stereotype suggest a level of judgmental criticism of the working class being implied, and if so does this open me up to valid criticism? Such questions do not have a straight and easy answer, I suggest, precisely because the perspective taken will depend upon the implicit biases of the reader.

#### ¶8. *Internal Factors*

Leon Festinger’s *When Prophecy Fails*, a study on cognitive bias amongst groups which were subjected to very clearly failed prophecies, begins with the following observation;

*A man with a conviction is a hard man to change. Tell him you disagree and he turns away. Show him facts or figures and he questions your sources. Appeal to logic and he fails to see your point.*

*We have all experienced the futility of trying to change a strong conviction, especially if the convinced person has some investment in*

*his belief. We are familiar with the variety of ingenious defences with which people protect their convictions, managing to keep them unscathed through the most devastating attacks.*<sup>314</sup>

This quote may be said in many ways to summarise the heart of the internal factors of implicit bias: that an individual, when presented with an argument which would seem to contradict those beliefs which they hold with some particular conviction, will often choose to reject the argument and indeed even the evidence (as can often be seen in the political arena when discussing major issues concerned both with the expert consensus around particular issues of policy and on issues such as the personal behaviour, characteristics, or even parentage of particular individuals.)

This may be seen to happen for various different reasons, perhaps the most obvious of which can be seen in the very presence of *conviction*. When we use the term conviction, there is often carried, above the simple plain definition of a firmly held belief, an implication that the belief in question is one on which the believer places great stock, and may to some extent place great value. Indeed convictions we may say are those beliefs which are most often played out in rituals of identity. There is a great emotional investment in our convictions as we regularly play them out as a signifier of who we believe ourselves to be. Extending further then we should find it reasonable to suggest that one will be more likely to accept an argument which is in full agreement with their convictions, whilst an argument which is the polar opposite of that conviction will be rejected harshly. It may then be suggested that we can expect an argument to be more or less accepted by an individual depending upon the degree to which it differs from existing convictions, with those which are closer, or bear more similarity, being the more acceptable. We would perhaps be wise to listen to Nietzsche's claim that "convictions are more dangerous enemies of truth than lies"<sup>315</sup>, a claim which may be seen to echo in the 20<sup>th</sup> century development in psychology of the theory of *cognitive dissonance*, which "centres around the idea that if a person knows various things that are not psychologically consistent with one another, he will, in a variety of ways, try to

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<sup>314</sup> Taken from an extract at 'When Prophecy Fails' <<http://www.whenprophecyfails.info/>> [accessed 12 April 2017].

<sup>315</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human All-Too-Human Part I*, trans. by Helen Zimmern, The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche (New York: Russell & Russell, 1964), VI, p. 355.

make them more consistent”<sup>316</sup> and notes that “sometimes it may be very difficult or even impossible to change behaviour or opinions that are involved in dissonant relations.”<sup>317</sup>

Another facet of the internal factors must also be mentioned, which is that of spiritual experience. In discussing spiritual experience it is not an intention to discuss necessarily the nature or truth-validity of such experiences, but rather to note that to many people spiritual experiences are a very real and actual occurrence, and that in such cases these experiences may play a strong role in their belief in a particular conviction (consider the stereotypical believer in a particular religion based up on faith despite evidence).

William James, for instance, notes that “feeling is the deeper source of religion, and that philosophic and theological formulas are secondary products”<sup>318</sup> such that he would “doubt if dispassionate intellectual contemplation of the universe, apart from inner unhappiness and need of deliverance on the one hand and mystical emotion on the other, would ever have resulted in religious philosophies such as we now possess.”<sup>319</sup>

This is a clear placement of *feelings* as prior to logic, and offers a gateway into the possibility of a new *first philosophy* other than the ones which we previously observed: a *first philosophy* which is not, however, feelings but as we shall see something else. Is it spirituality? This is also a seemingly obvious candidate but one which shall also be rejected. Rather this new *first philosophy* is *revelation*. That is to say that to the religious or spiritual mind that which comes prior to all other assumptions is the individual’s connection to supernatural knowledge. This might be best understood through the analysis that has been made by religious philosophers.

To begin with, Alvin Plantinga in his *Warrant* series discusses what he refers to as the “Aquinas/Calvin (or A/C) model”<sup>320</sup> which states that “there is a kind of faculty or a cognitive mechanism, what Calvin calls a *sensus divinitatis* or a sense of divinity, which

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<sup>316</sup> Leon Festinger, ‘Cognitive Dissonance’, *Scientific American*, 207.4 (1962), 93–102 (p. 3).

<sup>317</sup> Festinger, p. 4.

<sup>318</sup> William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*, ed. by Martin E. Marty, The Penguin American Library (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England ; New York, N.Y: Penguin Books, 1982), p. 431.

<sup>319</sup> James, p. 431.

<sup>320</sup> Alvin Plantinga, ‘Warranted Christian Belief - Oxford Scholarship’, 2000  
<<http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/view/10.1093/0195131932.001.0001/acprof-9780195131932>>  
[accessed 24 October 2017].

in a wide variety of circumstances produces in us beliefs about God.”<sup>321</sup> Thanks to this *sensus divinitatis*, “we don’t consciously choose to have those beliefs. Instead, we find ourselves with them, just as we find ourselves with perceptual and memory beliefs.”<sup>322</sup> We might say then that in this position revelation is seen as beliefs regarding the spiritual which are simply placed within us by God, just as though they were come upon through the senses. Spiritual beliefs then are grounded in their having been placed by an outside factor.

Meanwhile, if we return to Levinas we may find an alternative view of revelation, this one taken from a Jewish perspective. Levinas begins his essay *Revelation in the Jewish tradition* by describing “the Revelation” (revelation being presented as a singular proper noun already seeming to offer at least on the surface a major importance) as “an abnormal and extraordinary relationship, able to connect the world we inhabit to something which is no longer of this world.”<sup>323</sup> This would seem already to give us echoes of Plantinga’s *A/C model*, as the idea of a linking between the inhabited world and the unworldly could just as easily describe the *sensus divinitatis*. Likewise Levinas seems to be aiming towards similar conclusions when he asks, “how can we make sense of the ‘exteriority’ of the truths and signs of the Revelation which strike the human faculty known as reason? It is a faculty which, despite its ‘interiority’, is equal to whatever the world confronts it with. But how can these truths and signs strike out reason if they are not even of this world?”<sup>324</sup>

Rather than point merely to a *sensus divinitatis* however, Levinas points to the Jewish oral law, the Talmud, and to the practice of rabbinic discussion and interpretation such that “the Revelation is [a] continual process of hermeneutics, discovering new landscapes in the written or oral Word, uncovering problems and truths locked within each other.”<sup>325</sup> This is tempered by the observation that “in principle, the human mind is inherently open to inspiration and that man is inherently able to become a prophet...the receptivity of the prophet already lies within the human soul.”<sup>326</sup> What we then are looking at is, within at least the context of the Judeo-Christian approach to revelation, a

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<sup>321</sup> Plantinga.

<sup>322</sup> Plantinga.

<sup>323</sup> Emmanuel Lévinas, ‘Revelation in the Jewish Tradition’, in *The Levinas Reader*, ed. by Seán Hand, Blackwell Readers (Oxford, UK ; Cambridge, MA, USA: B. Blackwell, 1989), p. 191.

<sup>324</sup> Lévinas, ‘Revelation in the Jewish Tradition’, p. 192.

<sup>325</sup> Lévinas, ‘Revelation in the Jewish Tradition’, p. 199.

<sup>326</sup> Lévinas, ‘Revelation in the Jewish Tradition’, p. 204.

belief by which the individual has an in-dwelling faculty which, under the correct circumstances, will allow them to bypass reason in order to receive knowledge directly from an external supernatural source. Revelation as *first philosophy*, then, is the placing of “spiritual” experience in a position of priority over reason. This becomes more immediately obvious in its relevance when we see the declaration by Levinas that “the entire Revelation is bound up with the ritual practices of each day”<sup>327</sup> thus creating a direct link between the religious mind’s *first philosophy* and the performances carried out by the individual which, in the specific examples brought to mind by Levinas (those of Jewish practice as prescribed from the Talmud) are very blatantly tied in with expression and reinforcement of personal identity.

At this point we should ask the question: have we in fact attempted to make two separate concepts factors of one another? Whilst the external factors are certainly a discussion of implicit bias, it would seem that our internal factors are largely all related to concepts of cognitive dissonance in some manner. Cognitive dissonance is however a wide-ranging phenomenon in itself and to reduce it to a factor of implicit bias may be problematic. As a result it may in fact be more correct for us to argue from this point: that of the factors which must be overcome in the communication of an idea, there are those factors which we shall dub external and which may be viewed as the domain of implicit bias, and those which are internal and which deal rather with the domain of cognitive dissonance.

#### ¶9. On Emotions

My proposed solution to these problems lies in an understanding of performance as first philosophy but, to understand the manner in which it is so, we must first visit a concept of emotions based on a synthesis of two thinkers, Martin Heidegger and Robert C Solomon. We shall first explore Heidegger and his concept of *Befindlichkeit*, an often confusing idea which is sometimes conflated with emotion, although in fact it is best understood as a sort of *existential state*. Macquarrie and Robinson in what is the most standard English-language version of *Being and Time* translate *Befindlichkeit* as “state-of-mind”<sup>328</sup> although a more literal translation would be roughly “the state in which one

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<sup>327</sup> Lévinas, ‘Revelation in the Jewish Tradition’, p. 204.

<sup>328</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 172.

may be found.” Ratcliffe meanwhile describes *Befindlichkeit* as “the characteristic of finding oneself in a world through a mood”<sup>329</sup> whilst Inwood notes that the word “combines the ideas of ‘situatedness’ and of ‘feeling/faring somehow’, of *where* and *how* one finds oneself.”<sup>330</sup> *Befindlichkeit* may be understood in a sense as the lens through which the world is disclosed to the individual. Heidegger claims for instance that “only something which is in the *Befindlichkeit*”<sup>331</sup> of fearing (or fearlessness) can discover that what is environmentally ready-to-hand is threatening.”<sup>332</sup> As has been said, *Befindlichkeit* is sometimes conflated with emotion but is this conflation justified? If so, why does Heidegger neglect the German *Gefühl*, meaning emotion, choosing instead to link *Befindlichkeit* with mood (*Stimmung*)?

An element of difficulty can be found in this discussion in part because Heidegger does not seem to give any direct attention to the issue of emotions, which may lead us to question whether they even have a place in his philosophy, with mood taking their place entirely. Commentators have differing interpretations. Kaelin for instance states that “a human being is always in some mood; happy or gay (merry), sad or in a blue funk, even only bored. In its moods, the human being feels how it is, or knows how “things” are going: well or badly.”<sup>333</sup> This would seem to conflate mood and emotion together – moods to be seen as emotional states which act to filter the manner in which received phenomena are interpreted. That is to say that for instance to be happy is to be in a happy mood, or to be sad is to be in a sad mood. Dreyfus on the other hand stresses that we must “divorce moods from *feelings* colouring [one’s] world”<sup>334</sup>, implying that a separation is needed - indeed it might almost seem that there is a suggestion that feelings (or emotions) not mood create the lens. Is emotion then *Befindlichkeit*? Dreyfus takes his argument from Heidegger’s apparent claim that “the public too can have moods”<sup>335</sup> in a discussion in *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* on what Dreyfus refers to as “social moods”:

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<sup>329</sup> Matthew Ratcliffe, ‘Why Mood Matters’, p. 1

<[https://www.academia.edu/458309/Why\\_Mood\\_Matters](https://www.academia.edu/458309/Why_Mood_Matters)> [accessed 2 July 2014].

<sup>330</sup> M. J. Inwood, *A Heidegger Dictionary*, The Blackwell Philosopher Dictionaries (Malden, Mass: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), p. 131.

<sup>331</sup> In quotations from *Being in Time*, I shall substitute “*Befindlichkeit*” in place of “State-of-mind”

<sup>332</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 176.

<sup>333</sup> Eugene Francis Kaelin, *Heidegger’s Being and Time: A Reading for Readers* (Tallahassee: University Presses of Florida : Florida State University Press, 1988), p. 99.

<sup>334</sup> Hubert L. Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger’s Being and Time*, Division I (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1991), p. 170.

<sup>335</sup> Dreyfus, p. 171.

“A human being who... is in good humour brings a lively atmosphere with them. Do they, in so doing, bring about an emotional experience [Dreyfus: “produces in himself a psychic experience”] which is then transmitted to others, in the manner in which infectious germs wander back and forth from one organism to another? We do indeed say that...mood is infectious. Or another human being is with us... who through their manner of being makes everything depressing and puts a damper on everything; nobody steps out of their shell. What does this tell us? Attunements [Dreyfus: “moods”] are not side-effects [Dreyfus: “not accompanying phenomena”], but are something which in advance determine our being with one another. It seems as though an attunement is in each case already there, so to speak, like an atmosphere in which we first immerse ourselves in each case and in which then attunes us through and through [Dreyfus: “by which we are thoroughly determined”]. It does not merely seem so, it is so; and, faced with this fact, we must dismiss the psychology of feelings, experience, and consciousness.”<sup>336</sup>

Heidegger’s demand that we “dismiss the psychology of feelings” backs up the divorce of mood from feeling, however note also that what Dreyfus translates as “psychic experience”, McNeill and Walker call “emotional experience”. Under the latter, these social moods are social emotions.

Robert Solomon’s *cognitive theory of emotions* declares that “emotions are judgments”<sup>337</sup> whilst “tak[ing] judgment in a way that is not episodic...[and] not necessarily articulate or, for that matter, conscious.”<sup>338</sup> That is to say the supposed judgments being made are occurring at an automatic and subconscious level, at least most of the time. These judgments are incredibly complex:

Each emotion...is a specifiable set of judgments constituting a specific scenario. Anger, for example, is to be analysed in terms of a quasi-courtroom scenario, in which one takes the role of judge, jury, prosecuting attorney, and, on occasion, executioner...The object of anger is the accused, the crime is an offense, and the overall scenario is one of

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<sup>336</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, trans. by William McNeill and Nicholas Walker, *Studies in Continental Thought* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), pp. 66–67; Dreyfus, p. 171.

<sup>337</sup> Robert C. Solomon, *Not Passion’s Slave: Emotions and Choice*, *The Passionate Life* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. vii.

<sup>338</sup> Solomon, pp. 186–87.



judgmental self-righteousness... The scenario helps to explain, among other matters, the tendency to self-righteousness in anger, which in turn can be used to explain the motivation of petty anger and “bad tempers” and provide, in general, the beginning of a functional account of emotions.<sup>339</sup>

In the example case given, we see essentially that anger should be understood as a judgment having been made of offence committed against one’s person, with an element of self-righteousness. Solomon is sure to emphasise the personal element of the judgment: “One might make a judgment – or even much of a set of judgments – in an impersonal and uninvolved way, without caring one way or the other. Compare “What he said to me was offensive” (but I don’t care what he thinks) and “He offended me!” Only the latter is constitutive of anger. (The first is a judgment about the perlocutionary act potential of a certain utterance; the latter is, in part, a judgment about my own self esteem.”<sup>340</sup>

This, we may see, ties in to Solomon’s second major slogan, that “we choose our emotions.”<sup>341</sup> We must emphasise that Solomon does not intend to suggest a level of complete control over our emotions, but rather that although “it would be nonsense to insist that, regarding our emotional lives, we are ‘the masters of our fate,’ ... nevertheless we are the oarsman.”<sup>342</sup> He remarks that whilst “one cannot simply “decide” to have an emotion[...] one can...decide to do any number of things – enter into a situation, not take one’s medication, think about a situation in a different way, “set oneself up” for a fall – that will bring about the emotion. Or one might act *as if* one has an emotion, act angrily for instance, from which genuine anger may follow.”<sup>343</sup>

We may certainly understand that this linking of behaviour to emotional reaction is a fair one – one may work oneself into a frothing fury by intentionally dwelling upon or aggressively spouting off against a potentially offensive trigger – whether “rising to the bait” or for intentional dramatic purpose. The naturally shy individual engaging in public speaking or performance may “work themselves up” to overcome their natural

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<sup>339</sup> Solomon, pp. 20–21.

<sup>340</sup> Solomon, p. 21.

<sup>341</sup> Solomon, p. vii.

<sup>342</sup> Solomon, p. 194.

<sup>343</sup> Solomon, p. 193.

stage fright. On the opposite end of the scale, one pursuing a stoic approach to life may temper their emotional reactions by intentionally cultivating an attitude of detachment.

Taken at face value we may think that these two theories are incompatible: Heidegger in his discussion of mood and *Befindlichkeit* attempts to reject the psychology of feelings and experiences, however Solomon concentrates specifically on those psychologies. To Heidegger, mood is primal in the manner that the world is disclosed, but to Solomon emotion is a reaction to a previously-disclosed world. Despite this, I offer the following thesis as expressed previously in my dissertation for the degree of Master of Letters:

*“When in a mood, which is a mode of Befindlichkeit, the world is revealed in particular ways. Following Solomon, there are emotional states which we shall term derivative of the primal emotional states referred to as moods, and which are the result of a judgment based on the world as disclosed by that mood.”*<sup>344</sup>

How we are to understand this, is that we should create a distinction between two different types of emotion, which we may refer to as Emotion<sup>A</sup> and Emotion<sup>B</sup>. Emotion<sup>A</sup> will refer to those moods or emotions which are primal: those which qua Heidegger reveal the world in a certain manner. Emotion<sup>B</sup>, meanwhile, will refer to those which are not primal but rather arise from the primal. If “fear is a mode of *Befindlichkeit*”<sup>345</sup> then there is a primal fearful mood which reveals the world in a threatening manner and allows us to see the world as threatening. Heidegger’s fear is Emotion<sup>A</sup>, but from it might arise Emotion<sup>B</sup>, whatever we may call it – in a scenario which places judgment upon those things which our fearful mood accuses, we might make a judgment of confirmation (an emotional reaction of horror perhaps, or if a judgment is made to conflate threat with offense one of anger. Indeed anger and horror may often coincide), or rather we might judge that the revealing of a thing as fearsome is incorrect and to be disregarded (an emotional reaction of relief).

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<sup>344</sup> Stephen Whitehead, ‘The Philosophy of Horror: A Phenomenological Approach’ (unpublished Dissertation, University of Dundee, 2014), p. 26.

<sup>345</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), p. 181.

### §3. Application.

#### ¶10. *Emotions*

What is the value of this model of emotion? Consider the following:

1. Emotion<sup>B</sup> may arise as a natural reaction to an argument which one might encounter.
2. An emotional reaction to an argument is one which will cloud one's ability to respond in fully rational/logical manner.
3. Emotion<sup>B</sup> arises whilst in a state of Emotion<sup>A</sup>.
4. We may understand the claim that "we choose our emotions" in part to refer to our ability to, through particular actions, moderate the Emotion<sup>A</sup> state that we are currently in and, consequently, the filter through which we understand the world.
5. Performances may alter the Emotion<sup>A</sup> state of the individual.

Statement 5 is perhaps controversial and in need of further justification – why should we claim that a performance can alter one's mood, and that any emotional response to a performance is not merely an Emotion<sup>B</sup> response arising from a judgment on the merits of the performance? The exact mechanism may well be beyond the scope of this thesis, however I would suggest that there are good reasons to believe that such an effect is well within the scope of reasonable belief. It certainly seems to be the case that mood can be changed as a result of environmental factors – Heidegger does after all suggest that mood can be infectious within the confines of a crowd of people. The strength of a good book, film, or play, is often that it draws forth an emotional response that was not necessarily expected by the audience: a sudden change in mood or tone, say from optimism to pessimism or to fear can result in, to use a cliché, an emotional rollercoaster. Indeed the cathartic effect of many great works lies precisely in the ability to so effect an audience. Let us suggest then that one of the effects that ritual may have is in changing the mood of the participants, that as such the manner in which a philosophical argument is performed may affect the way in which the argument is disclosed to the audience member and so change the judgments that may be made towards it.

From here we may say that a goal of philosophy is to perform one's argument in such a way that the judgments made of the work are based on the merits of the argument, and not on a perceived slight leading to a response that it is overly clouded by emotion. The manner in which this may be done is a question for further study, which would begin with an exploration of how exactly it is that performance affects Emotion<sup>A</sup>.

Whilst such a study is out with the limits of the current thesis, we might at this juncture consider the following: we have seen in our discussion of first philosophy a general development in thought, and resultantly in new ways of approaching the world philosophically. Indeed we might argue that the general history of philosophy follows such patterns, with new thinkers who react to previous thought in order to reveal new ways of viewing the same subjects (indeed were this not so, academic philosophy would quickly stagnate). Philosophy then may be seen as engaged with the creation of new tools for the analysis of the world,<sup>346</sup> with those that are given the most attention being those which have a value in their current time and context and with some having a longer or shorter shelf-life than others.<sup>347</sup> With our focus on the role of performance as first philosophy we may be opening an opportunity for philosophy to develop those tools in new and exciting directions: namely those which move out with the paradigm of linguistic communication. Consider the discussion in chapter 2 of utterance and signed languages. We have already envisioned a context in which communication can be found out with the box into which it is usually found – a language which is primarily tactile/visual rather than oral/aural carries with it assumptions regarding factors such as privacy, community, and so on which would be alien to the majority of Hearing persons.

Moving beyond languages entirely though, examine the following image:

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<sup>346</sup> To be understood here in a Heideggerian sense of the entire immediate phenomenological environment in which Da-Sein exists.

<sup>347</sup> See also Deleuze's claim that 'a book of philosophy should be a particular species of detective novel [in which] concepts, with their zones of presence, should intervene to resolve local situations. They themselves change along with the problems.' in Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, Continuum Impacts Changing Minds, Repr. with corr (London: Continuum, 2011), p. xix.



*Figure 5 Photograph of youths apparently relaxing whilst the WTC burns in the background. Photograph by Thomas Hoepker, originally published in David Friend, *Watching the World Change: The Stories behind the Images of 9/11* (New York; Godalming: Picador, 2007) and*

Even to one who has never seen this image before, the context is quite clear: the photograph was taken on September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001. In the background we can see smoke billowing from the site of the terrorist attacks, a blot on an otherwise peaceful landscape. In the foreground, across the bay in Brooklyn a group of five individuals sit on the shoreline apparently socialising and relaxing in a state of disregard towards the horrors occurring a few miles away. The image is of course one open for debate: are we viewing an act of callousness, in which the ongoing events are quickly forgotten about and allowed to pass into the background? Or if the photograph had been taken a few moments before or after would we have seen an entirely different apparent response to the attack? Whilst these questions are important, they do not come until after the immediate emotional response to the image. Removed from any sort of context, or dependent upon the context it is placed in, the image could be used to communicate to the viewer a commentary on the American culture. A more recent photograph demonstrates a similar point:



*Figure 6 Photograph taken in the aftermath of the terrorist attack on Westminster bridge. Photograph by Jamie Lorrman and reproduced without permission.*

The photograph was taken in the direct aftermath of another terrorist attack, this time in London on March 23<sup>rd</sup> 2017. Central and in the background of the photograph this time is a victim of the attack, critically injured after having been hit by a vehicle. Whilst a group of people stands around in shock, two of them on their knees apparently attempting to offer first aid and presumably contact an ambulance, the woman in the foreground appears to be walking past and ignoring the scene, instead checking her phone. Whilst within the wider context it is known that no such callous behaviour was in fact taking place, the image on its own can be seen to give a different story. The woman's dress and skin tone, and the context of a terrorist attack in post-9/11 Britain where a high level of distrust against Muslims can be found in some segments of the population, allows this picture to be used to communicate without words a dangerous message. Just as the group relaxing in Brooklyn might communicate an indictment of young Americans, so might this image be used to communicate an indictment of Muslims, the subjects of the photographs acting as representatives for their wider groups.

An image is not in itself a performance, but the displaying and viewing of the image, within particular contexts and with or without commentary, as well as the response given by the viewer, most certainly is. The photographs discussed above utter comment upon the segments of society represented in the frame, a performance which uses an image-based “language” outside of what may be conventionally understood in order to communicate its message. Rancière draws attention to “the poster showing an anorexic young woman naked and wasting away, put up throughout Italy during Milan Fashion Week in 2007”<sup>348</sup> which acted as “an exhibition of the truth of the spectacle”<sup>349</sup> – a slightly different working of photography, as its power comes not from the image giving an impression which context would reveal to be false but rather from being placed within a context which forces the reality behind the performance of the fashion industry to be made central in the viewer’s awareness.

A study of such performances should be able then to lead to new tools being created by philosophy, tools which allow us to question and understand the world through intentionally-choreographed unspoken performances, non-linguistic rituals of philosophical questioning. Socrates drinking his hemlock may become not merely a demonstration of the conclusion of the philosophically good life, but take on itself a new life and a perhaps even a system of philosophy itself. What is proposed is not the demolition or removal of language, but rather the expansion of its boundaries.

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<sup>348</sup> Rancière, p. 83.

<sup>349</sup> Rancière, p. 83.

## Chapter Five

In this final chapter I will provide a demonstration of the ideas discussed in the previous chapter, through the medium of a case study on a theoretical theatrical performance.

This performance would consist of three acts, centred around the exegesis and discussion of the philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre. Act one shall consist of Sartre's most famous play, *No Exit*, with Act 2 consisting of David K. O'Hara's 2012 rebuttal *The Upstairs Room*. The first sections of this chapter will examine in detail these plays, their themes, and the manner of their interaction. The theoretical "Act 3" will then be discussed, with the bulk of the questioning being what it might consist of and why, and the way in which it can be used to maximally push forward an argument or further questioning upon the interaction of Acts 1 and 2. Finally I will discuss more fully the manner in which this case study relates to the previously laid down framework. This third section may be of particular interest, due to the manner in which this thesis has progressed: whilst overtly theatrical products have been previously mentioned, and the metaphor of theatre has been present throughout the discussion of what constitutes performance etc. (especially the metaphor of the *theatrum mundi*), our focus thus far has been on "improvised" and non-theatrical performance, indeed when the previous chapter ended we seemed to be focussed on the performance of the communication of ideas. The sudden move then to a performance occurring on stage is one which may take the reader by surprise. This apparent incongruity shall therefore be addressed in detail.

The question may be raised as to why the choice of a theoretical performance is made here, rather than focussing a case study on an existing performance. There are two reasons: firstly, that the existence of these two plays provided for an exciting point of analysis and that unfortunately to the best of my knowledge no performance of the two together has at the time of writing been attempted. Secondly, given that no such performance has occurred it is my hope that this case study may at some future point be used as a starting point for the production of the performance described.



## §1. No Exit and The Upstairs Room

### ¶1. *No Exit*

*No Exit*, first performed in 1944, is a play about three people in hell. Even at this most superficial level it can be said to offer a powerful philosophical statement, with the famous proclamation that “hell is other people”<sup>350</sup> often (mis-)used in popular culture. In the play’s scenario three individuals, Garcin, Inez, and Estelle, are placed together in a room for eternity and will act as each other’s torturers: Inez, a lesbian, is to be tortured by her unrequited attraction to Estelle, whilst Estelle will be similarly tortured by Garcin. Garcin, meanwhile, wishes to be recognised as a hero and not as a coward after being executed for desertion from the army and recognises that only Inez has the necessary insight into human nature to truthfully declare him such, something she refuses to do.

For those familiar with Sartre’s work, the torture goes beyond this mere surface level. An initial clue exists in the play’s French title, *Huis Clos*, which is equivalent to the legal term *In Camera*, referring roughly to “closed” proceedings which occur out of the public eye. Likewise the characters in *No Exit* are away from the public gaze, and indeed to any gaze other than that of each other – Garcin notes initially that there are “no mirrors, I notice. No windows...and nothing breakable”<sup>351</sup> such that the torture victims are essentially invisible to themselves. This can be seen to tie in to Sartre’s concept of being objectified by the gaze of the other (“for the Other I have stripped myself of my transcendence”<sup>352</sup>, he declares, suggesting that one is generally aware of one’s self and one’s actions only as an extension of one’s consciousness when alone, with the gaze of another causing one to be aware that one exists physically, being viewed by the Other as an object), and the “bad faith” of allowing oneself to be defined by the other’s gaze (indeed it is precisely the being defined by one another that causes their entrapment – Garcin requires Inez to define him as he wishes to see himself, Estelle wishes to be defined as an object of attraction by a man, whilst Inez wishes Estelle to see her as attractive). Hell then is not so much other people as it is the “gaze” of others, and more precisely that gaze for eternity: the tortured souls are together in one room, with no night time and no loss of lights, they do not sleep or blink and cannot die

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<sup>350</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, ‘No Exit’, in *No Exit, and Three Other Plays*, Vintage International ed (New York: Vintage International, 1989), pp. 1–46 (p. 45).

<sup>351</sup> Sartre, ‘No Exit’, p. 4.

<sup>352</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 286.

again. There is no escaping the gaze of the Other even for an instant (indeed implicitly for the duration of the play at least, there was no such escape even in the initial moments of Garcin's being alone in the room and would be none even if the three characters were to close their eyes or look away from each other, thanks to the gaze of the audience from beyond the fourth wall). Contextually this play was originally performed in Paris during the occupation by the Nazis and thus the fear of constant observation by an enemy "Other" would hold a special resonance to the audience of the time, with an implied political commentary occurring.

## ¶2. *The Upstairs Room*

In *The Upstairs Room* hell is not other people. Indeed, hell is not overtly referenced, and there is no direct statement that the characters are in the afterlife (by the conclusion only one is directly and unambiguously stated to be dead.) There is however an implication of intersubjectivity as a positive force: whereas Inez toward the end of *No Exit* bemoans that "here we are, forever"<sup>353</sup>, the protagonist of *The Upstairs Room*, Gordon, describes the room in which the play takes place as "a holding place, sort of. A stop gap, for those of us seeking a way out. If we make the right connections, see, we can escape. We can just go."<sup>354</sup> Gordon, an American writer, finds himself in an upstairs attic in a post-apocalyptic London, waiting allegedly for the paperwork required to escape on a ferry to America. He is later joined by Stella, an apparent victim of "the underground", with whom he begins a sexual relationship, and then the mysterious Iris who forces a revelation of the suppressed truth: that Gordon and Stella were married until Stella's suicide and that he fled to London to find a connection to his lost wife. At the play's conclusion "Stella is gone"<sup>355</sup> and the fate of Gordon and Iris is left ambiguous, but on a hopeful note.

As with *No Exit*, the choice of title is an interestingly multi-layered one – the obvious meaning is that the events of the play occur in a room on the top floor of a boarding house, but there are other possibilities also within. An initial association that one might make may be a biblical one – the "upper room" is a common name given to the *Cenacle* in Jerusalem, traditionally held to be the room where many New Testament events including the last supper (according to Mark 14:15) and Pentecost occurred. The

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<sup>353</sup> Sartre, 'No Exit', p. 46.

<sup>354</sup> David K. O'Hara, *The Upstairs Room* (London: Methuen Drama, 2012), p. 22.

<sup>355</sup> O'Hara, p. 54.

contribution of such an allusion to the story does not however seem particularly obvious, aside from the possibility that the events occur in a form of purgatory. A more overt and definite meaning appears initially in scene 3, when Stella is discussing her childhood home and reveals that “there was this mysterious upstairs room I discovered one day and turned into my own.”<sup>356</sup> The story that Stella then tells of the room highlights the primary themes of the play regarding interactions with others. As a lonely child, Stella would write letters to imagined recipients:

*I wanted to write poetry, you know...but I felt, I always felt, I should be sending these to someone. Even the most intimate of intimate details. I had to make believe I was sharing with somebody: imaginary sisters, imaginary man. All of them living in far away locales.*<sup>357</sup>

These letters once written were hidden beneath the floorboards and forgotten. Years later she returns to the room with a neighbour with whom she is implied to have begun a romantic relationship. Having lost the “sense of carefulness”<sup>358</sup> which led to hiding the letters, she pulls them back out and burns them. Later, Iris tells a story which is revealed to have been one of the ones which Stella wrote in her letters, designed to make her feel better in her loneliness. In the story, a lonely owl who is scared of the dark flies to a pond every evening to greet her reflection, “pretending...that it’s somebody else there keeping her company in the dark.”<sup>359</sup> After thousands of such nights she meets a fish in the pond, who explains that

*For the longest time, I’ve been down here afraid of the water. So afraid, in fact, that I’ve been coming to this side of the pond every night, just so I can look up at the moonlight and listen to your voice. Just so I could feel I had some company here in this lonely pond.*<sup>360</sup>

This upstairs room and its stories highlights the play’s themes and response to Sartre: that the story involves the creation of an Other through the use of reflections in order to fill a gap left by loneliness, emphasises the importance of connection.

As with Sartre, O’Hara has filled his play with philosophical references of interest to those who are looking. Early on, for instance, direct reference is made to both Sartre

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<sup>356</sup> O’Hara, p. 26.

<sup>357</sup> O’Hara, p. 27.

<sup>358</sup> O’Hara, p. 28.

<sup>359</sup> O’Hara, p. 42.

<sup>360</sup> O’Hara, p. 42.

and his critics – searching for paper to feed into his typewriter, Gordon stumbles upon a copy of Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*. Placing it aside, he embarks first upon a spate of writing which appears to be intended to shed light on the themes of the play:

*The truth. Yes, the truth of writing functions as a life raft. Life-preserver, I should have said. 'Truth means Liberation. Fighting for absolute clarity and...facticity. Lifting us up from the icy depths. All that suffocating fear and darkness.'*<sup>361</sup>

This is followed up, in the context of Gordon wearing a false beard, by what may seem to be a direct reference to *No Exit* in the form of a reference to the lack of sources of reflection, although in this case tagged to an implication that the suffering brought there in comes not from a being defined by others but rather the hellishness of solitude and the need for others to help create one's definition:

*Gordon A Mirror. Have-you-gotta-have mirrors for this?...Really?...Maybe just a window pane. No? Or a shard of...Neither paper nor reflections...Really nothing?...A room, a situation, sans reflection...He will have to trust himself. Alone. And not for the first time. [...]Man alone in the universe, must manage...his own disguises. Guard his otherness above all others.*<sup>362</sup>

At the conclusion of this rant, Gordon notes the possibility of “perhaps a deus ex machina to dangle down, mercifully, to him in this shameful self-predicament of his, underlining, absolutely, above all, that hell is without a doubt...’ What-was-it-again?...yeah, ‘other people...’”<sup>363</sup> thus placing front-and-centre Sartre's thesis, which the play will rebut.

The talk of the guarding of otherness and managing of disguises is an interesting one, in light of Stella's story later in the play regarding her own upstairs room. Note the loss of “carefulness” that came about when she was no longer alone in the room. The existence of an actual connection has removed the need for a careful guarding of intimate writings, the “poetic licentiousness”<sup>364</sup> of imaging the reading of private thoughts gone

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<sup>361</sup> O'Hara, p. 13.

<sup>362</sup> O'Hara, p. 13.

<sup>363</sup> O'Hara, p. 14.

<sup>364</sup> O'Hara, p. 27.

and replaced with a liberating carelessness: “the last thing I wanted was to remember what I’d written, hidden so bloody bloody carefully all those years ago. We got ashes everywhere, literally everywhere, in our hair, on our skin...Naked, rolling around...Careless.<sup>365</sup>” In the upstairs room, connection with others helps to remove care – care for hidden thoughts and desires, care for fear (absurdly of night for the owl and of water for the fish), but yet it is facing those careful things that have been forgotten which the connections between the cast allow to be fostered.

Merleau-Ponty re-emerges in scene four:

*Gordon Listen to this instead. ‘The existence,’ it says here. ‘The existence of other people is a difficulty and an outrage.’ How d’you like them (Bad French.) sentiments?*

*Iris (to Gordon) But it’s a surprise too, isn’t it? Really at the end of the day-*

*Stella Pay no attention to him.*

*Iris (to Gordon) It’s like, I surprise you and you surprise me.<sup>366</sup>*

The quote is incomplete – the full line declares that “the existence of other people is a difficulty and an outrage for objective thought.”<sup>367</sup> The suggestion however of the “surprise” element is an interesting one – where Gordon could be seen to be supporting Sartre through his quote-mining, Iris turns the idea on its head, suggesting that whilst the existence of others may well be a difficulty and an outrage it is also a positive thing, a constant “surprising” through interaction with the other. This may seem to be reinforced by the final line of the play being Gordon’s expression of gratitude: “Thank you, Iris...thank you for coming.”<sup>368</sup>

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<sup>365</sup> O’Hara, p. 28.

<sup>366</sup> O’Hara, p. 41.

<sup>367</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. by Colin Smith (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 406.

<sup>368</sup> O’Hara, p. 55.

¶3. *Two plays ideal for a back to back performance?*

*The Upstairs Room* exists as a direct rebuttal to *No Exit*.<sup>369</sup> To fully appreciate a rebuttal however one must be familiar with the work which is being rebutted. This creates a potential problem: is it fair to expect the audience to be familiar with Sartre's work before seeing the response? Whilst such an understanding is not needed to enjoy the play, it is certainly fruitful if one wishes to understand the full breadth of the references made. Given that both plays consist of a single act a little over an hour in length, we may allow for an interesting solution: performing the two back to back, to ensure that the audience not only has the necessary context but has Sartre's work fresh in mind when presented with O'Hara's rebuttal. O'Hara's having written the play specifically to replace a production of *No Exit* makes this especially convenient due to the shared elements – both have a cast of two male and two female characters (Valet/Garcin/Estelle/Inez|Manager/Gordon/Stella/Iris), and similar sets ("A drawing room in the Second Empire Style"<sup>370</sup> featuring three couches, one of which is green and another red]"A dingy attic space, something akin to Alberto Giacometti's Paris Studio...Two couches (one green, one red) have been placed centrally"<sup>371</sup>).

Further, O'Hara has intentionally included various references to Sartre: the most obvious perhaps is the previously mentioned call-out to the famous "hell is other people" but others are more subtle. The reference to the dead as "absentees", for instance – in *No Exit* this usage is clear: after Garcia specifically notes that they are dead, Estelle responds with "please, don't use that word...I suggest we call ourselves – wait!- absentees."<sup>372</sup> In *the Upstairs Room* however the usage is more subtle, with Gordon's ontological status kept vague and only hinted at:

*Gordon* Can I ask how...How many people have you, uh, successfully,  
you know....spirited away here?

*Manager* Absentees, you mean?

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<sup>369</sup> See O'Hara's description in an interview of the play as 'a response to what Sartre was grumbling about' at 'Rebecca Emin: Interview with David K. O'Hara, Novelist and Playwright' <<http://ramblingsofarustywriter.blogspot.co.uk/2012/01/interview-with-david-k-ohara-novelist.html>> [accessed 7 March 2018].

<sup>370</sup> Sartre, 'No Exit', p. 3.

<sup>371</sup> O'Hara, p. 3.

<sup>372</sup> Sartre, 'No Exit', p. 12.

*Gordon If...that's the name they're giving it now. Yeah. Absentees.*

*Absentee-ism*<sup>373</sup>

Likewise, the aforementioned lack of reflections, and the existence of an unreliable bell/intercom to contact the manager/valet (in *no Exit*, “there’s something wrong with the wiring and it doesn’t always work”<sup>374</sup> whilst in *The Upstairs Room* although the intercom works perfectly “it’s a special system we have. You must, *never*...use this intercom...Not unless you first get the signal.”<sup>375</sup>)

A further reason to perform the two plays together is one of interest: *No Exit*, it might be argued, is on its own a relatively uninteresting play, carrying its single message with all the subtlety of a hammer, and featuring largely unsympathetic characters whose interactions largely consist of discussing exactly how unlikeable each of them is. The scope for literary analysis, as a result, is narrow and limited largely to a few set lines. *The Upstairs Room*, meanwhile, is interesting largely because of its relation to Sartre’s work – as a piece on its own the play is arguably not well written, with reviewers who described it as “self-indulgent” and “too absurd even for Camus”<sup>376</sup> as well as being guilty of “losing [the] audience in an(sic) sea of confusion.”<sup>377</sup> It is for these reasons that the most fruitful analysis of the two plays for this chapter has come about precisely in examining the manner in which they relate to one another, rather than as individual works. It is this intertextual relationship which causes O’Hara’s play to be elevated from an obscure and somewhat marginal piece to one of great scholarly interest.

A question to be considered here is the casting: should each performance have a different cast, or should the same actors be used in both. The similarity within the two lists of characters would allow for the same four actors to be used in each, either with a direct swap to equivalent characters, or with a rotation of roles within (i.e. having one actor play Garcin/manager etc.) A partial cast swap may also be an interesting proposition in order to emphasise a level of connection, carried out by having the main cast change but maintaining the same actor for the relatively minor roles of the

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<sup>373</sup> O’Hara, p. 8.

<sup>374</sup> Sartre, ‘No Exit’, p. 7.

<sup>375</sup> O’Hara, p. 10.

<sup>376</sup> ‘Too Absurd: The Upstairs Room at the King’s Head Theatre’, *One Stop Arts*, 2012  
<<http://onestoparts.com/review-upstairs-room-kings-head-theatre>> [accessed 4 April 2018].

<sup>377</sup> ‘West End Wilma – The Upstairs Room’ <<http://www.westendwilma.com/the-upstairs-room/>> [accessed 4 April 2018].

valet/manager. As shall be noted in §3. This choice may have an effect also in the possibilities of the third “act” of the overall performance.

#### ¶4. *A note on staging*

Whilst attention has been given to the setup of the scenery and property on stage, which we have seen have distinct shared elements across both performances, the nature of the stage for the performances may also be of interest. Generally, theatrical productions are performed on a so-called *proscenium stage*, set out with the audience viewing from one side – the metaphorical “fourth wall”, and *No Exit* was first performed at the Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier in Paris, on just such a stage. As an alternative staging however consider the “theatre in the round” – an arena style staging in which the stage is central and surrounded on all sides by audience members. If such a stage setup was used for *No Exit*, it could potentially be harnessed in order to draw a further comment on the role of the Other’s gaze per Sartre – not only are the characters diegetically unable to escape from each other’s gaze due to the constant light and lack of sleep or blinking, non-diegetically they are under constant surveillance from all angles by the audience, thus there is no place they can hide. Such a scenario may seem familiar if we hark back to the concept of the *co-opticon* as discussed in the first chapter. Whilst the scenario is not necessarily a true co-opticon (for the audience are not watching one another and may be protected from the gaze of the characters by the fourth wall), it is nonetheless one in which within the realm of the story there is an effect of all constantly watching, viewing, and performing for all. An interesting effect might be achieved through an allowance of the fourth wall being broken in order to cause a true co-optical effect.

There are two problems with this staging: the first is that both *No Exit* and *The Upstairs Room* call for a door through which characters enter and leave. This would be impractical without some means of passage between the stage and the area which would be conventionally dubbed “backstage”, and further the passage of off-scene actors through the audience area could be naturally viewed as a part of the performance. Secondly, *The Upstairs Room* calls specifically for the use of a slide projector, which is used to project (although it is unstated onto where) images of Gordon and Stella during their marriage. The surrounded stage, lacking a physical wall or any given direction in which all the audience will be facing, presents a potential problem for this as there is no suitable location for the image to be projected (with the exception perhaps of the roof, although as the script specifically notes the existence of a skylight this presents a further



issue of immersion-breaking – one which perhaps would be interesting to explore *a la* Brecht...) The projector is essential to the play and cannot be reasonably removed – indeed it offers a major thematic point in that it introduces a manner in which Gordon and Stella, although robbed of mirrors, may actually view themselves (albeit as figures of their past, rather than immediately). Would it be possible to introduce the projector into *No Exit* also? There are points in the play in which the cast discuss what is occurring in their absence back in the land of the living, and it would perhaps be interesting to project images of such scenes, or indeed of the characters' pasts at the times they discuss them, albeit in a manner implied to be non-diegetic.

Allowing for a moment a more imaginative level of staging consideration (assuming a limitless budget both monetarily and in terms of space), a further interesting solution may in fact be to stage the two plays in different areas – perhaps by placing *No Exit* in the round theatre whilst *The Upstairs Room* occurs by necessity of the projector on a second, more traditional stage. This opens us up to various possibilities – are the two plays still performed one after the other? Alternatively, do we offer two simultaneous performances, allowing the audience to purchase a ticket which will allow an entrance to each, in whichever order they prefer? Or perhaps allow free movement between the two performance spaces, a la *Sleep No More*.

Can we allow our ambitions to run ever more wild, creating some level of extra performance in the same manner, perhaps bringing in the activities of the manager and his family, the valet and his uncle (and the other valets?), or even other inhabitants of the land of the dead? Perhaps as in Koji Suzuki's *Watercolours*, in which an acting troupe performs a play taking place across multiple verticals at once, such that the audience must view each separately. The separate activities could be stacked one atop another, with simultaneous performances linking together in a manner that can only be understood after seeing all the separate levels performed.

## §2. Act III

What will our theoretical third act resemble? There are several options which present themselves, the most obvious answer being a third play. Even if such a simple solution were taken (assuming it to be the best possible option), however, we would still be left with the question as to what such a play would be like. I shall now examine in broad

strokes various possibilities, both for the format of an original companion piece and for other options.

#### ¶5. *Denying the Self*

A possible broad interpretation of the two plays is that they centre on conflicting views of the nature of the self. In this view to Sartre the self is separated from the other, with the individual defining their own *essence* through their own actions, whilst to O'Hara the self is tied up in social interaction, with who one is being defined by and through their relation to others.<sup>378</sup> A third play might comment on this with a suggestion that the self simply does not exist in such terms – presenting the characters as having personalities which exist within some sort of flux, perhaps, or in some other way drawing upon an emphasis that there is not an ongoing continuation (perhaps by taking O'Hara's narrative tool of partial amnesia exhibited by certain characters and replacing it with a total amnesia by all?)

#### ¶6. *Sartre's Response?*

It would be interesting to know how Sartre might respond to O'Hara – unfortunately with his having died more than thirty years previously we can only surmise based on his existing work how he may have felt. Despite this setback it may be interesting as a thought experiment to present a possible response as our third act. Such a response would most likely address the issue of bad faith (French: “*mauvaise foi*”), a key concept of Sartre's philosophy best understood as inauthentic behaviour brought about through conformity to external forces. The classic and often referenced example Sartre puts forth is that of “a woman who has consented to go out with a particular man for the first time”<sup>379</sup> and who acts in such a way as to deny her partner's carnal intentions: “she does not want to see the possibilities of temporal development which his conduct represents...she refuses to apprehend the desire for what it is; she does not even give it a name; she recognises it only to the extent that it transcends itself toward admiration, esteem, respect and that it is wholly absorbed in the more refined forms which it

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<sup>378</sup> This interpretation is offered for instance by Katherine Gregor at ‘Theatre: “The Upstairs Room” – We Are Who We Are Not in Spite but Because of Others. | Scribe Doll's Musings’  
<<https://scribedoll.wordpress.com/2012/11/07/theatre-the-upstairs-room-we-are-who-we-are-not-in-spite-but-because-of-others/>> [accessed 19 March 2018].

<sup>379</sup> Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 78.

produces, to the extent of no longer figuring anymore but as a sort of warmth and density.”<sup>380</sup>

In doing this, Sartre wishes to claim that she is effectively denying temporarily her physical nature, taking the compliments given purely at face-value removed from their subtext and directing them purely at herself as a consciousness. Sartre later notes that “bad faith is not restricted to denying the qualities which I possess, to not seeing the being which I am. It attempts also to constitute myself as being what I am not.”<sup>381</sup> Bad faith, in other words, consists of inauthenticity through denying or inventing aspects of oneself. It is at heart a rejection of the total freedom which Sartre believes we possess, in favour of conforming to some false idea.

O’Hara can most certainly be accused of promoting bad faith behaviour (indeed if the interpretation that his message is that we are who we are precisely because of our interaction with others is correct, a rejection of the concept of bad faith and an embracing of that which would fall under it is central: it is a rejecting one’s freedom to authenticity in exchange for a form of determinism). Given that O’Hara has ended on a note of hope for the victims, perhaps the response might involve a solution to allow for the possibility of hope without falling into bad faith, if such were possible. A potential problem of course with this approach is that it places O’Hara in the role of foil to Sartre: in this case the production will become one which is specifically geared toward a Sartrean analysis. Whilst this is not in itself a negative point is in some way limiting in comparison to a performance intended to explore the conversation in a more neutral of expansive manner.

### ¶.7 *Merging Plays*

Rather than an entirely new play, an alternative option will be to explore possible worlds related to those of the two established plays. We might for instance have our performance ask the question of what would happen should the characters in the two meet (in such a circumstance the question as to the cast size would again arise – a cast of seven or eight will allow for a more interesting on-stage mix of characters. This scenario might allow for an examination of personal relationships outside of the

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<sup>380</sup> Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, pp. 78–79.

<sup>381</sup> Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 90.

boundaries established originally – will Sartre’s characters be removed from hell with the addition of those not chosen to torture them? How will the addition of characters not already linked to them affect O’Hara’s? As an alternative could act three involve swapping the environments in which the characters are placed, to give a brief exploration of how the changed scenario might affect their survival?

As a more ambitious form of merging, and one which would perhaps be more suited towards the 4-actor model, we might attempt to combine the two plays, covering key scenes together which slide between the two scripts at key moments in order to create a continuity which highlights and emphasises points of connection and similarity between the two plays.

#### ¶8. *The Merleau-Ponty Connection*

Merleau-Ponty has previously been cited as a reference, if not a definite important influence. A third act might explore further his theories. Consider the following passage:

*Until the final coma, the dying man is inhabited by a consciousness, he is all that he sees, and enjoys that much of an outlet. Consciousness can never objectify itself into invalid-consciousness or cripple consciousness, and even if the old man complains of his age or the cripple of his deformity, they can do so only by comparing themselves with others, or seeing themselves through the eyes of others”.*<sup>382</sup>

The key message to be taken here concerns that as one experiences the world particular labels do not exist phenomenologically – rather they are only understood from viewing oneself from the other’s perspective. This differs from Sartre in that he understands one’s essence to be created by one’s behaviour, whereas Merleau-Ponty seems to be suggesting, rather, that such concepts stem from how those actions are perceived within a social framework. Our third act might find a way to explore this concept in a more explicit manner than the oblique referencing provided by O’Hara.

#### §3. **A Deleuzian approach?**

A further and perhaps important insight into this theatrical performance may be found in the work of Gilles Deleuze, particularly within the context of his discussion of what has

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<sup>382</sup> Merleau-Ponty, p. 504.

been dubbed by commentators “minor theatre”. This concept is found primarily within Deleuze’s 1978 essay *One Manifesto Less*, originally published alongside Carmelo Bene’s script for *Richard III: or, The Horrible Night of a man of War* as a volume entitled *Superpositions*. It should be noted that this publication together does raise a serious challenge: the essay cannot be divorced entirely from its original context, as if it can be read independently to glean a particular truth or rule. Parts III and IV in particular contain close analysis of the actions occurring on stage in Bene’s play whilst a familiarity in general of his wider works and events related to him such as the politics surrounding the initial production of *S.A.D.E* is presupposed of the reader. Despite this, an English-language version of *Superpositions*, or of the script for *Richard III*, is not readily available – rather *One manifesto Less* is found separately and translated specifically for the 1993 collection of essays entitled *The Deleuze Reader*. Despite this, there are principles which we shall find may be of direct application to *No Exit* and *The Upstairs Room*.

#### ¶9. “Minor Theatre”

Deleuze begins by telling us that Bene proclaims his work to be “a critical essay on Shakespeare”<sup>383</sup>, albeit a critical essay which is immediately unusual as it “is in itself a piece of theatre”<sup>384</sup> – a play as a critique of a play. This criticism is further unusual in that it does not, so to speak, add literature to the play in the manner of an essay written to be read alongside the original and thus somehow shed light upon it. Rather, the criticism is enacted by “subtract[ing] the literature, for example [subtracting] the text, a part of the text, and [seeing] what happens.”<sup>385</sup> This subtraction is not random however: rather, “it is the elements of power, the elements that make up or represent a system of power, which are subtracted, amputated, or neutralized.”<sup>386</sup> Why the elements of power? Because “the elements of power in the theatre are those which assure at once the coherence of the subject dealt with and the coherence of the representation on stage”<sup>387</sup> This removal acts to allow Bene to create entirely new stories out of original works, and further “it is not only the theatrical material that he changes, it is also the form of the

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<sup>383</sup> Gilles Deleuze, ‘One Manifesto Less’, in *The Deleuze Reader*, ed. by Constantin V. Boundas (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), pp. 204–22 (p. 204).

<sup>384</sup> Deleuze, ‘One Manifesto Less’, p. 204.

<sup>385</sup> Deleuze, ‘One Manifesto Less’, p. 205.

<sup>386</sup> Deleuze, ‘One Manifesto Less’, pp. 206–7.

<sup>387</sup> Deleuze, ‘One Manifesto Less’, p. 207.

theatre... which releases...a nonrepresentational force always in disequilibrium.”<sup>388</sup> It is this nonrepresentational force which will later be given the title of “minor theatre” by those commenting upon it.

The concept of the minor theatre as interpreted from Deleuze is one which, as the name suggests, is based on the concept of minority, specifically as relates to the use of language. Discussing the concept of a “minor” language, Deleuze proclaims that “major and minor do not so much qualify different languages as different uses of the same language”<sup>389</sup> and that the minor use of language is one characterised by “immanent, continuous, and regulated variation.”<sup>390</sup> This variation is described as “the theatre of language”<sup>391</sup> and it is this variation that is seen to be central to the concept of minor theatre. For instance Cull argues that “Deleuze’s essay...articulate[s] a...methodology for creating a theatre of ‘non-representative force’.”<sup>392</sup> Cull further suggests, referencing Todd May, that the variation is synonymous with the “difference-in-itself that, for Deleuze, constitutes the real”.<sup>393</sup> This variation, Deleuze claims, exists in all language to some extent as “you will not arrive at a homogenous system that is not still worked on by immanent, continuous, and regulated variation: this is what defines every language by its minor use; a broadened chromaticism. a black English for every language.”<sup>394</sup> If “major languages are languages of power”<sup>395</sup> then the minor use of a language is the way in which the powerless minorities work upon it (the “black English” found in certain communities in America being highlighted by Deleuze perhaps because it is the most notable example within popular culture)<sup>396</sup> – this may be compared to Deleuze & Guattari’s commentary on Kafka in which they observe that “a minor literature doesn’t come from a minor language; it is rather that which a minority constructs within a major language.”<sup>397</sup> This concept is interlinked with the claim that a hallmark of a minor

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<sup>388</sup> Deleuze, ‘One Manifesto Less’, p. 207.

<sup>389</sup> Deleuze, ‘One Manifesto Less’, p. 210.

<sup>390</sup> Deleuze, ‘One Manifesto Less’, p. 210.

<sup>391</sup> Deleuze, ‘One Manifesto Less’, p. 210.

<sup>392</sup> Laura Cull, ‘Introduction’, in *Deleuze and Performance*, ed. by Laura Cull, Deleuze Connections (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), pp. 1–21 (p. 5).

<sup>393</sup> Cull, p. 5.

<sup>394</sup> Deleuze, ‘One Manifesto Less’, p. 210.

<sup>395</sup> Deleuze, ‘One Manifesto Less’, p. 209.

<sup>396</sup> One wonders how Deleuze would respond to the rise of hip-hop culture in today’s society – would such musicians be viewed as performing a type of minor literature?

<sup>397</sup> Gilles Deleuze, ‘Minor Literature: Kafka’, in *The Deleuze Reader*, ed. by Constantin V. Boundas (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), pp. 152–64 (p. 152).

language is in its “deterritorialization” – that the members of the minority group “live in a language that is not their own...or no longer...know their own and know poorly the major language they are forced to serve”<sup>398</sup> and that, as such, their usage of the language will be highlighted by its being different to the “major” or standard usage, marking them out as a minority.

Whilst the minority of the language in question is emphasised in the explanation of minor theatre, there is a second minority at work: that of the author. Just as the minor literature is written in a minor language, so too it is written by a minority. The criteria of the minor author is that he is “untimely”<sup>399</sup> – that whereas the major author writes works that are relevant to the present in which he or she is writing (that is to say, the major author interprets his time), the minor author is “without future or past, she has only a becoming, a middle, by which she communicates with other times, other spaces.”<sup>400</sup> This criteria of untimeliness is important as it highlights Bene’s use of the works of others in his role as minor author – to Deleuze any work can be made major through its being “normalised”<sup>401</sup> and made relevant to the current time in which it is performed.

This effect is seen in Shakespeare when his work “is subjected to the traditional theatre, his magnification-normalisation”<sup>402</sup> and yet it is perfectly possible to “conceive of the reverse... to impose a minor or minimising treatment in order to extricate becomings from history, lives from culture, thoughts from doctrine, grace or disgrace from dogma”<sup>403</sup> and that it is such a procedure which Bene performs in order to “rediscover in him this active minoritarian force.”<sup>404</sup> If the mark of the minor author is that he speaks in a minor language, then the mark of the minor theatre when applied to a major author is it moving of the language from major to minor.

It is here that we return to Deleuze’s opening discussion of Bene’s “Critical operation”: just as the major language is a language of power and the minor is one which subverts the major, so the amputation of power through “the subtraction of stable components of

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<sup>398</sup> Deleuze, ‘Minor Literature: Kafka’, p. 156.

<sup>399</sup> Deleuze, ‘One Manifesto Less’, p. 208.

<sup>400</sup> Deleuze, ‘One Manifesto Less’, p. 208.

<sup>401</sup> Deleuze, ‘One Manifesto Less’, p. 208.

<sup>402</sup> Deleuze, ‘One Manifesto Less’, p. 208.

<sup>403</sup> Deleuze, ‘One Manifesto Less’, p. 208.

<sup>404</sup> Deleuze, ‘One Manifesto Less’, p. 208.

power”<sup>405</sup> with the result of “a nonrepresentational force always in disequilibrium.”<sup>406</sup> is at the heart of minor theatre. Deleuze shows two ways in which this is done:

The first is specific to Bene in his adaptations of the works of others, and is the removal of those characters from the performance who “make up or represent a system of power”<sup>407</sup> such as “Romeo [from *Romeo and Juliet*] as representative of the power of families; the master [from *S.A.D.E?*] as representative of sexual power; the kings and princes [from *Richard III*] as representatives of the power of the State.”<sup>408</sup> It is this that allows the minor theatre to be a theatre of becoming – the concept that the interesting part of the story is not how it ends but rather what happens to get there. The removal of elements of power results in a concentration on the becoming-other of the characters who remain – Mercutio in *Romeo & Juliet*, the slave in *S.A.D.E* and the titular character of *Richard III*.

The second is in the aforementioned “theatre of language” – it is the causing of language to “stammer”. How this is achieved may vary – In the case of Bene, “an assemblage of overlapping recorded and live voices in a complex score”<sup>409</sup> is used in order to create what Deleuze dubs “a kind of *Sprechgesang*”<sup>410</sup>, but Deleuze does not intend to prescribe any exact method for the creating of a stammer other than that of “impos[ing] on the language...the work of continuous variation.”<sup>411</sup> With no prescription given, we find ourselves faced with the question unanswered as to how the performing of language may be affected. Whilst clues to this question are to be found elsewhere in Deleuze’s writing, in particular *The Exhausted*, Deleuze’s 1992 afterword to a collection of teleplays by Samuel Beckett, such a direction risks creating a distraction from the main topic at hand, and as such I will now turn to examine the application of the concepts so far discussed to the topic of Sartre and O’Hara.

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<sup>405</sup> Deleuze, ‘One Manifesto Less’, p. 207.

<sup>406</sup> Deleuze, ‘One Manifesto Less’, p. 207.

<sup>407</sup> Deleuze, ‘One Manifesto Less’, p. 206.

<sup>408</sup> Deleuze, ‘One Manifesto Less’, p. 207.

<sup>409</sup> Cull, p. 10.

<sup>410</sup> Deleuze, ‘One Manifesto Less’, p. 211 Original emphasis.

<sup>411</sup> Deleuze, ‘One Manifesto Less’, p. 213.



¶10a. “His critical essay is in itself a piece of theatre.”<sup>412</sup>

If O’Hara’s play is a response to Sartre’s, can it then be viewed as a “critical essay”? It is perhaps a stretch to suggest that it serves this function in the same manner as Bene’s production serves according to Deleuze, however the familiarity of elements between the two plays does suggest that there is perhaps some credibility: whilst O’Hara’s characters are not Sartre’s, they carry surface similarities as regards their names and genders. The setting likewise carries its similarity as well as its stark differences. Even certain story beats can be seen to coincide. At a stretch we might even suggest that O’Hara has, intentionally or unwittingly, emulated the subtraction of the elements of power: whilst *No Exit* reminds us throughout that overlords of hell are ultimately responsible for the fates of the cast, going so far as to actively toy with them (the opening door to freedom at the climax of the play), in *The Upstairs Room* there is a noticeable absence of any higher (lower?) power. The location is unexplained, as is the ultimate fate of Stella when she leaves the upstairs room.

¶10b. “The play ends with the constitution of the character”<sup>413</sup>

Alongside this apparent amputation of power, is there also a theatre of becoming-other? Again it may be stretching somewhat to make such claims, however, there is certainly a “becoming” involved: as has been already stated the apparent theme that O’Hara wishes to explore is one which suggests that the self is constituted by exposure to the Other, and to this extent we see the characters develop and to some extent change in their self-understanding through their interactions and the climactic revelation of the truth. We might even suggest that the revelation is interesting precisely because it returns a level of power that has been temporarily amputated through the characters’ amnesia: the forces imposed by the marriage relationship, by the implied social pressures and mental health issues which led to Stella’s suicide, and so on.

¶10c. “How are we to understand this relationship...between the original play and the one derived from it?”<sup>414</sup>

Deleuze sees in Bene’s critique an amputation of power not only from within the play but from the theatre itself:

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<sup>412</sup> Deleuze, ‘One Manifesto Less’, p. 204.

<sup>413</sup> Deleuze, ‘One Manifesto Less’, p. 206.

<sup>414</sup> Deleuze, ‘One Manifesto Less’, p. 204.

*Now the elements of power in the theatre are those which assure at once the coherence of the subject and the coherence of the representation on stage. It is at the same time the power of that which is represented and the power of the theatre itself. In this sense the traditional actor has an ancient complicity with princes and kings – the theatre, with power: thus Napoleon and Talma...When [CB] chooses to amputate the components of power, it is not only the theatrical material he changes, it is also the form of the theatre, which ceases to be “representation” at the same time that the actor ceases to be an actor....And the originality of his approach, the ensemble of his procedures, seems to us to consist first of all in this: the subtraction of stable components of power, which releases a new potentiality of theatre, a nonrepresentational force always in disequilibrium.*<sup>415</sup>

This concept of a non-representational theatre is one which O’Hara does not approach: there is no removal of the “elements of power” from the theatre and indeed the production is scripted very much in the traditional manner. The role of our “third act” may be to find a manner in which to implement such a subtraction. To do this in a manner emulating Bene – with the use of combined live speech and “lip-synch” for instance – puts a risk of lacking originality, however it does open to interesting thought – what happens for instance when the productions of the two plays are allowed to overlap and interfere with one another, thus breaking the sanctity of the magic circle in which the performance occurs – if the play as performed by rote is near-ritualistic then the introduction of such disequilibrium via the simultaneous performance of two different plays attacks the power of the theatre by breaking its sanctity.<sup>416</sup>

#### **§4. Wider Context**

What is the purpose of this excursion into theatre, and how does it fit in to the wider arguments of this thesis? In the previous chapter I suggested (§3) that “a goal of philosophy is to perform one’s argument in such a way that the judgments made of the work are based on the merits of the argument”, that “philosophy may be seen as

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<sup>415</sup> Deleuze, ‘One Manifesto Less’, p. 207.

<sup>416</sup> A similarity can perhaps be found in the productions of “Shitfaced Shakespeare” annually performed at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, in which a Shakespeare play is performed with the twist that a randomly selected cast member is subjected to the consumption of vast quantities of alcohol immediately before the performance – a disruption resulting in truly unpredictable consequences!

engaged with the creation of new tools for the analysis of the world”, and that the boundaries of language may be expanded outside of those which are conventionally understood and into the realm of “intentionally-choreographed unspoken performances, non-linguistic rituals of philosophical questioning.” It may seem at first that these claims have little to do with the preceding case study – are theatrical performances not after all ones in which the arguments are not so overt as they are implied, and is theatre not one of the oldest tools of analysis, and is the performance in question not, on a surface reading, one which is decidedly lacking in a move out with conventional language boundaries? For the rest of this section I will examine each of the three points in order to rebut the objections, and then argue for the lessons learned here to be applied to other, non-theatrical, performances.

¶11. *Problem: That “a goal of philosophy is to perform one’s argument in such a way that the judgments made of the work are based on the merits of the argument”, yet in theatrical performances arguments are generally implied rather than boldly stated.*

A theatrical performance is not one which is conventionally considered as having an argument as central to its purpose. Even in the case of *No Exit*, in which the overriding theme is explicitly declared by a character in the closing moments, the themes are largely implied rather than stated. In this particular case study, things become more complicated – what is the argument? Both plays carry their own arguments (or one an argument and the other a counter argument), and the performance of act 3 will likewise carry one, but is any of the three arguments the overall argument being made, or is there a fourth unspoken argument occurring in the interaction?

To understand the answer, we must first ask what exactly the purpose is of this performance, to which there are two possible answers. It is either one of using the two existing plays as a tool for advancing a third argument, or it is to showcase the two plays in order to emphasise the dialogue occurring between them. In either case the overall argument of the performance as a whole is not to be found within any single script, but rather exists intertextually – a point which will be directly relevant to ¶13. If the role of the performance in this case is to hinge upon the merit of the argument rather than any factors around it, then perhaps it is to be said that the previously mentioned “boring” and “overt” nature of *No Exit* as a play is a merit here – the play being of small literary interest allows an emphasis to be placed upon the themes in the dialogue, and with the correct use of staging and relating of the plays to one another, we should be able to draw attention away from the plays as literature and on to the performance as conversation.

¶12. *Problem: That “philosophy may be seen as engaged with the creation of new tools for the analysis of the world”, yet theatre is an incredibly old tool.*

This problem might be taken further, with the observation that the issues explored by Sartre and O’Hara are also old and well-discussed issues, that there is no real philosophical or academic novelty involved, other than the format of the performance being an unusual one. In response to this criticism, however, it should be noted that the tool in question is not the type of performance in itself but rather the combination of variables – we should not view this performance in terms of its components (theatrical performance, the two different plays, the themes and messages of the plays, and so on) but rather the whole that is created, such that this particular performance not only stands alone but also each possible variation of scenes and of stagings has the potential to be a new tool of illumination through the uncovered themes and ideas.

¶13. *Problem: That our interest is in “intentionally-choreographed unspoken performances, non-linguistic rituals of philosophical questioning”, yet this performance is decidedly and clearly within traditional linguistic and spoken boundaries.*

Let us return to the point raised in ¶11 that the overall message of the performance is contained intertextually – that is, it is not so much an overly broadcast or spoken point, but rather a message communicated to the audience through the unspoken links and relations between the different performances which make up the three acts. These links and relations may be seen as comparable to the discussion of photographs and images raised in the previous chapter (§3). The goal then of this performance will be in part to focus when selecting elements of staging, costume, format, etc. on the unspoken message which may be transmitted through their interaction, and how this will allow the audience to analyse and consider the arguments given, placed into their own merit.

¶14. *Fitting it all together*

From a goal of understanding the communication of philosophy through its performance we moved in this chapter to an analysis of a theoretical performance of two or three plays. I have offered rebuttals to three objections which might have placed this case study into a category of irrelevant to our overall goal, how then shall the case study be applied? The answer may be found in §4: does Deleuze offer us a bridge between theatre and straight philosophy? There is already a breaking-down that has

been revealed: the play as “critical essay”, the “non-representative” nature of the performance (although we must tread carefully in this area: for have we not committed to the idea that ritual is in some way tied up in representation of a sort? If the roles of rituals are to either present or question identity then it would seem that only one form of performance, that which questions rather than asserts, can fall into the non-representational category herein discussed.)

Deleuze offers for consideration towards the close of *One Manifesto Less* a broader meaning of minority, that of a universal “becoming in which one is engaged”<sup>417</sup> and borrowing this concept we might declare the “minor performance” to be one concerned with a becoming of who one is, removed from the definitions imposed by others – the ritual which designates one’s identity or the ritual which questions it may both be brought together as the ritual which causes one to become that which one is constantly asserting through one’s own rituals, rather than how one is described by external authorities.

In the theatrical performance as critical essay, just as in the lecture as critical essay or the critical essay written down as critical essay, there will be laid out both overtly and covertly certain mannerisms, references, particular uses of language and so on which will be suggestive of ritual, which speak to the viewer/listener/reader in such a way as to challenge or speak to pre-set ideas. *No Exit* alongside and interlaced with *The Upstairs Room* provokes us to bring about new perspectives and understandings of both, which may not have been obvious separately, and which the standard essay may not be able to draw out with such distinction. Is it perhaps the case that it is in provoking our performance as it originally existed to stammer that we are freed to the possibilities to change that performance, with that change in itself being a ritual of questioning and altering?

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<sup>417</sup> Deleuze, ‘One Manifesto Less’, p. 221.

## Conclusion

Jan Snoek, in his discussion of the initiation rituals of Continental Freemasonry, gives the following description:

*During the opening ceremony, the basically ordinary room to be used for the ritual is transformed into a sacred space by first verifying if the room is guarded against outsiders getting in and if all present have the degree which will be worked in, and then marking the ritual space and time, proper for performing the ritual. Once this is done, a performative speech act, such as the Master of the lodge pronouncing the words “Brethren, in the name of the Great Architect of the Universe, I declare the Lodge duly open for the purposes of Freemasonry in the First Degree” (Emulation ritual, ed. 1976), followed by knocks with a hammer by the Master and the two Wardens, effectuates the transformation. Now the initiation ritual properly can be performed. The closing ceremony finally inverses the transformation, usually again with a performative speech act, this time by one of the Wardens, such as “Brethren, in the name of the Great Architect of the Universe, and by command of the W[orshipful] M[aster], I close the Lodge” (Emulation ritual, ed. 1976), accompanied by the usual knocks.<sup>418</sup>*

These rituals, he further notes, “exhibit the characteristics of initiation rituals as found throughout the ages in all cultures all over the world.”<sup>419</sup> Certainly within this simple description we see clearly marked out the elements of performance discussed in this thesis. There is a set “sacred space” in which the ritual will be performed: it is a space which can, as in Brook’s stage, be any ordinary room but which is specially set aside for purpose through its use in the rituals. Further, the space becomes the stage of performance through its combination with actions (the “marking...proper for the ritual”, the use of “knocks with a hammer”) and utterance which acts performatively through its

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<sup>418</sup> Jan A.M Snoek, ‘Masonic Rituals of Initiation’, in *Handbook of Freemasonry*, ed. by Jan A.M. Snoek and Henrik Bogdan, Brill Handbooks on Contemporary Religion, volume 8 (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2014), pp. 321–27 (p. 322).

<sup>419</sup> Snoek, p. 326.

being uttered by those with the authority make the required declarations. Whilst the opening and closing ceremonies and the ritual are described in such a way as to give the impression of being three separate occurrences happening sequentially, they are the acts of a single performance, with a clearly delineated beginning and end. It can however be noted that within this performance there are separate rituals occurring: for the initiate, the important ritual is the initiation which grants a new identity as part of a group, whilst for the other participants there is a ritual of confirmation – a re-enactment of sorts which reinforces an identity into which they are already initiated. The element of re-enactment becomes most clear in the initiation of the degree of Master Mason, in which the myth of the death of Hiram Abiff is “simultaneously retold, and performed with the candidate in the role of Hiram”<sup>420</sup>.

Throughout this thesis, several threads have intertwined. In choosing this particular ritual as an example to begin my conclusion, I perceive that they are visibly highlighted within: the first thread, *Befindlichkeit*, as discussed in Chapter Four, refers to a particular mood which the opening and closing ritual creates. The other threads are introduced in Chapter One: Ritual speaks for itself, whilst the role of playful and unplayful approaches are down to the individual and are perhaps available to little direct analysis other than the acknowledgment that, like all rituals, they will occur. Performativity’s place is clearly stated by Snoek: the speech act is performative in a classic Austinian sense of an utterance which causes an effect on the world whilst the actions of the hammer and so on may also be said to take a performative role. Finally the *theatrum mundi* and the *co-opticon* exist in the background, inasmuch as they describe the wider meta-setting of the ritual.

### **Thread One: Befindlichkeit**

In Chapter One (§2), I referred to Sicart’s assertion that *play* is a mode of being. The language used, describing play as “a form of understanding what surrounds us and who we are, and a way of engaging with others”<sup>421</sup> bears a striking similarity to Heidegger’s concepts of *Befindlichkeit*, or *attunement*, as discussed in chapter 4 (§11). Heidegger, in

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<sup>420</sup> Snoek, p. 326.

<sup>421</sup> Miguel Sicart, *Play Matters, Playful Thinking* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2014), p. 6.

introducing the term, notes that “what we indicate *ontologically* by the term [befindlichkeit] is *ontically* the most familiar and everyday sort of thing; our mood, our Being-attuned.”<sup>422</sup> Macquarrie and Robinson, as has been noted, translate *befindlichkeit* as state-of-mind although in doing so they also observe that “it should be made clear that the ‘of-mind’ belongs to English idiom, has no literal counterpart in the structure of the German word, and fails to bring out the important connotation of finding oneself.”<sup>423</sup>

I would like to draw attention to another unseen point in the translation. The phrase translated our “mood, our being attuned” is in the original German, “die Stimmung, das Gestimmtsein”<sup>424</sup>. *Gestimmtsein* is a compound verb consisting of two verbs: the ever-present *Seinen* (to be), and *Stimmen*. *Stimmen* refers to the tuning of a musical instrument such that we might understand *Gestimmtsein* in a sense of being-(musically)-tuned, a sense which is lost in the translation to English, wherein *attunement* is often used in a sense with no implied musical connection. Within this context, it is perhaps not coincidental that alongside mood, *Stimmung* may carry the meaning of an instrument’s tuning<sup>425</sup>. For the purposes of this thesis, then, we might say that *befindlichkeit* is ontically the most familiar and everyday sort of thing: the process of tuning and the state of being tuned. Tuning may be said to be one of the most basic stages in the performance of playing an instrument: although it is often not witnessed by the audience, it is in many ways the most important and primal component, insofar as the tuning will affect the sounding of the notes all throughout the performance.

Likewise, if we are to understand *befindlichkeit* in terms of the tuning component of the ritual then it is to be said that one’s mode of being is what will resonate and affect the entirety of the ritual’s form. In the context of play as an example of *befindlichkeit*, this allows us a return to our original setting out of ritual as being divided into those that occur within a playful *befindlichkeit* and those which occur within an unplayful

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<sup>422</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 172.

<sup>423</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 172 Translator’s footnote.

<sup>424</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 19. Aufl., unveränd. Nachdr. der 15., an Hand der Gesamtausg. durchges. Aufl. mit den Randbemerkungen aus dem Handex. des Autors im Anh (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2006), p. 134.

<sup>425</sup> This connection has also been noted by Erik Wallrup, who discusses the concept of *Stimmung* in detail, including Heidegger’s treatment, in *Being Musically Attuned: The Act of Listening to Music* (Farnham, Surrey, UK, England ; Ashgate Publishing Company : Burlington, VT, USA: Ashgate Pub. Limited, 2015).



*befindlichkeit*. From here the discussion of *emotion* in Chapter 4 (§12) may be seen as being also a discussion of how rituals occur within a particular tuning and how through the performance of rituals an act of tuning the spectator (and perhaps the performer) may occur.

### **Thread Two: Rituals at Play**

The second thread is the model of the intersection of play and ritual, as discussed in chapter I. All actions, I suggested, occur whilst in a certain *mode of being*, which should be understood as the previously discussed concept of *Befindlichkeit*: manners by which one is *tuned* for their performance within the world. Sicart suggests that play is a mode of being. Taking this contention as a starting point, I have argued that *Befindlichkeit* and play are intimately connected. Rituals, I claim, may be performed in a playful or an unplayful tuning wherein the difference marks the difference between a “live” and a “dead” ritual; that is, one which is performed with active engagement and one which is performed simply by rote with no real engagement or understanding (this raises an interesting point as to whether the performing of a ritual in a dead manner is nonetheless a meta-ritual of its own, suggesting a level of unquestioningness in one’s identity).

I further stated that the most interesting rituals are those which occur when there is an element of mixed approach between the participants – those who are aware of the playful nature of the ritual and those who are not. Those rituals are stated to be the ones which rather than a statement of identity may lead to a questioning and potential changing of identity.

In the second division of this thesis, each of the case studies demonstrated a ritual. The rituals of chapter 3 were for the most part specifically those of re-enacted myth. Historical re-enactment was shown as a performance designed to reinforce a cultural identity by recreating in a controlled setting the theoretical actions of one’s ancestors. Within this there were distinct groups who may be suggested to demonstrate the range of playful and unplayful activity within ritual: the so-called *hardcores* with their emphasis on historical fidelity at all costs would seem to sit comfortably in the latter. Within the former, those who favour less historical fidelity and so therefore will be more inclined to take liberties may have a higher access to a playful approach: consider for example the following image:



*Figure 7 Historical re-enactors during downtime at an event in Methil, Scotland. Image copyright unknown, and used without permission.*

It will be immediately apparent that historical fealty is not a priority to the re-enactors in question – the mix-match of armour, weapons, and clothing are representative of various time periods and geographic locations. Further, some of the clothes worn are of obvious modern manufacture. Such elements of playfulness may allow for the ritual to take on new meanings: not only defining oneself in relation to a mythic ancestry, but also questioning and creating identity facets in relation to one's hobby of re-enactment. The referencing to the “lynching plays” in Chapter Three as re-enactment of myth following on from the same description as applied to Civil War re-enactment is, on first glance, an exception: the plays discussed very real and immediate on-going events and did not contain some obvious element of sentimental avoiding of uncomfortable truths, romanticizing, or supernatural intervention. Consider, however, that the focus of such plays was not on the lynching per se but rather on the affected persons and their responses to the events which occurred to and around them. It may be said then that these events are “myths” in that they are stories rooted in real events and designed to have a role in group identity and the processing of and coping with traumatic ongoing experiences. These rituals are decidedly “alive” – in particular because they were reacting to immediate events, and because of their pedagogic intent.

The political re-enactments, meanwhile, are more interesting: the ritual in itself may as practised be “dead”, a largely cynical and unplayful performance of humanising and personalising, but are there exceptions? Trump's Presidential campaign may certainly

be seen as a potential source of “play”, as Trump consistently and knowingly broke rules again and again in relation to how one is *supposed to* run a political campaign. The example of the *Her Opponent* performance, gender-swapping but otherwise exactly replicating events, can also be seen as an example of a playful re-enactment, albeit one which came with very serious overtones – an example perhaps of dark play in action.

What of the rituals of academia? It has certainly been demonstrated that while the formats have evolved they have at the same time retained an element of continuity throughout; that there is a ritualised performance ongoing in the lecture and the seminar. Whether there is the presence of a myth of sorts is in doubt – if it does exist out with the content of what is being taught, then it is perhaps the myth of the academy as being a particularly privileged and hallowed place elevated above the uneducated masses. There is of course space for playfulness within the rituals of academia: new pedagogic techniques may be tested and trialled. The traditional structure, once understood, may be edited and played with by the instructor for effect. To some extent the act of learning to participate as instructor must be done in a playful manner – it is by experimenting and risking failing that the instructor gains an understanding of what will and will not work, of how and why the accepted methods are accepted.

The rituals of Chapter Four concerned how philosophy is performed. This was of course the area in which *Befindlichkeit* features most prominently, with the discussion given as to how the manner in which an individual finds themselves *attuned* will reflect on how an argument is received and processed. If said individual is to be understood as a co-participant in a ritual, then the role of the ritual in making a persuasive argument is one in which the participants are put into a particular mood – one which is playful, thus allowing for the serious consideration of a change in ideas and perspectives.

In chapter Five when a discussion was made regarding a theatrical performance, we may suggest that that discussion was itself playful: various possibilities were put forth for how the same basic script might be performed although ultimately none were chosen. Plays which were written for a particular purpose were placed into a different purpose and context in order to create new meaning. From such a playful discussion, it should then be possible to create a playful performance: using such groundworks to situate the theatrical performance in new ways, and to build upon those ideas put forth by earlier theorists.

### Thread Three: Performativity

The concept of performativity, central to this thesis, was introduced in chapter 1 in relation to Austin's prescription of the performative as those utterances which constitute actions. To Austin an utterance becomes an action when it is performed in the correct manner and circumstances, and by one who is recognised as having the authority to perform it – thus it may be seen in many ways to be an oral ritual of sorts. Within chapter 2 utterance was also noted, with a new meaning given which would subtly alter our understanding of performativity: as well as moving utterance out of the realm of language, allowing for non-verbal utterance, I defined it to mean a communitive gesture which makes known the meaning of an action in relation to the performer's identity. Judith Butler, meanwhile, declares that “performativity is not just about speech acts. It is about bodily acts.”<sup>426</sup> The referring to bodily acts as performative is interesting, tying in to the idea that an utterance may be non-verbal – that our behaviour may impart meaning just as speech does.

At this juncture, it is interesting to note that in recent months the term “performative” has taken on a popular usage in common discourse as an adjective referring to actions which serve to draw attention to the individual performing them whilst failing to actually contribute to the stated goal: performative friendship, performative activism, performative allyship etc<sup>427</sup>. On a surface level, this may seem to be a meaning of *performative* which is separate from the meaning considered by Austin: whereas Austin's *performatives* cause something to happen, the modern lexicon *performative* is a point of criticism, appended to an activity in order to indicate that it does nothing that the activity is traditionally meant to do (the *performative activist* is essentially the so-called *virtue signaller*: their supposed activism consists largely of making a vocal display of their support for the chosen cause). In fact, according to the understanding of *performativity* that we have been exploring we see that these activities are very much

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<sup>426</sup> Butler, *Undoing Gender*, p. 198.

<sup>427</sup> See for example discussions in Jasmine Hart, 'Are You Practicing Performative Allyship?', *Affinity Magazine*, 2017 <<http://affinitymagazine.us/2017/07/09/are-you-practicing-performative-allyship/>> [accessed 15 August 2018]; Stuart Heritage, 'How to Spot a “Performative” Friend, from Taylor Swift to The Rock', *The Guardian*, 23 July 2018, section Life and style <<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/shortcuts/2018/jul/23/how-to-spot-a-performative-friend-taylor-swift-rock>> [accessed 15 August 2018]; 'Performative Wokeness Needs to Stop', *Varsity Online* <<https://www.varsity.co.uk/violet/14313>> [accessed 15 August 2018]- it is perhaps interesting to note that in most sources discussing these concepts, there seems to be an assumption that the reader is already familiar with the term, as though it developed fully formed in the colloquial consciousness and does not require definition.

performative in the sense that they act as rituals which affirm the manner in which the individual wishes to be identified/to identify themselves: the *performative activist* loudly and visibly identifies the cause with which they wish to be associated whilst demonstrating ritually their commitment to that cause in the same action.

#### **Thread Four: The Co-Opticon and the Theatrum Mundi**

These two concepts, as discussed in the introduction, have been central to the understanding of performance throughout the thesis. They are the “where” of everyday performance, the stage created of “empty space” described by Brook. The concept is simple to understand: the rituals which have been examined throughout the thesis occur in a “theatre of the world”, such that they create for themselves a stage on which to occur spontaneously as needed. The performances are co-optical: the participants are simultaneously performer and audience, all constantly viewing one another and being viewed, performing for all including themselves.

Consider, for example, the modern day circus arena: the professional sports game. On one level there is a basic division between the performers (the players on the field), and the spectators (the fans). In fact a few moments thought reveals that this is rarely the case. The fans will often create their own additional performances – the songs sung in the terraces, or less jovially the abuse hurled at the referee, or the players, or the opposing fans. In some cases the existence of the media may play into the performances, with fans attempting to draw attention to the cameras in order that they may be displayed on the jumbotron or even the television broadcast – and sometimes these performances might be picked up and specifically commented on by the commentators or pundits. This creates a perfect *co-optical theatrum mundi* in microcosm: the players perform for the fans as the fans perform for the fans and in some cases capture also the attention of the players, in some cases even gaining interaction. Everyone is both potential spectator and potential actor in the performances carried out on the stages created within the designated space within the designated time period set aside for the sport. This same effect, out with the designated space and time, can be found outside such arenas.

#### **A weaving together of threads**

Returning for the moment to the end of Chapter Five, I proposed that Deleuze’s concept of *minor theatre* offers an insight into how a performance can be caused to assist in the

communication of ideas. The concept focussed on was that of the theatrical performance as a critical essay, provoking an established performance to “stammer” in such a way as to open up possibilities of new performance styles or variations. Such a provocation will allow the subject matter, the theme and messages communicated, to be viewed in new ways. On one level it might be suggested that this is a mundane and banal observation: is not the role of the director in part to find new variations of a performance in order to better highlight themes hidden in the text? Whilst this is true, the concept of *stammering* as taken from Deleuze seems to imply something further than a straight performance with decisions made regarding staging, costume, acting methods and so on. Rather, Deleuze talks of a change to the theatre itself through the amputation of power and of representation.

The key in the *stammer* in this analysis is that it moves into the realms of change: on some level a ritual of questioning and altering is performed upon an existing ritual in order to cause it to become something both new and the same. The ritual of the persuasive lecture, for instance, becomes not merely a relaying of information and argument but a relaying of information and argument plus something else – a ritual of attunement which invites the audience to act in their role as an active participant in the ritual and to perform in a particular manner – to become attuned to consider the arguments made upon their own merit. The threads that have run through this thesis combine together to show the ways in which this stammering should be effective, and the areas in which the stammer may take effect.

What is it that stammers? It is a co-optical ritual which takes place upon the stage of the *theatrum mundi*. The stammering may be of the ritual’s actions, its utterances, even the manner in which it manipulates the space which it commandeers for its use. The stammering may in part relate to the mood or attunement in which the participants of the rituals perform: is it playful or unplayful? The stammer may cause whichever is the default to change for some or all participants. This attunement may, through the stammering, be caused to spread amongst the participants in order to reveal to them new meanings within the ritual, or allow the form of the ritual to change from having one particular effect or purpose to another. The *Befindlichkeit* concept becomes one which can refer in part to the type of ritual that is occurring – one might be in a *Befindlichkeit* of questioning, of affirming, of rejecting and so on.

### Scope for Further Research

There are several areas which may be of interest for further research. These range from what might be deemed in the line of “traditional” philosophical enquiry to more practice-based interdisciplinary investigation, likely involving a level of collaboration with other scholars/practitioners. Ideally this research will lead to several publications including at least one book as well as a number of peer-reviewed journal articles.

One project which springs immediately to mind would be in relation to non-Western philosophical traditions and their approach to ritual/performance. Consider, for instance, the philosophy of Confucianism, in which ritual behaviour is given a strong emphasis. Given the claim I put forward in chapter one that the concepts which have been examined in this thesis are in some manner universal, the fact that the philosophers I have drawn upon have been almost universally from Western traditions might be levelled against my approach as a criticism. By examining the role of ritual in philosophical traditions from China and India, for instance, a firm test may be made regarding the validity of my assertions as well as the question of whether such assertions must be updated in light of currently not realised concepts. Such an examination might, given the common influence of what may be deemed spiritual/religious traditions on much of ancient non-Western philosophy, find itself assisted by a particular concentration in the area of comparative religion. This might involve looking at similarities and differences in ritual traditions in particular (indeed the “westernisation” of certain religious traditions which originated outside of the West may provide valuable insight into cross-cultural links and similarities), and would build in particular on the research that has been done regarding Girard, and the views on revelation and spiritual experience put forth by James (*The Varieties of Religious Experience*), Plantinga (*Warranted Christian Belief*), and Levinas (*Revelation in the Jewish Tradition*).

The proposed performance discussed in Chapter Five is also an area of potential most obviously in its potential to actually be performed in order to test the proposed theories in action. Using that performance as a launch pad, it may be interesting also to examine other performances with particular interest put on theories put forward by thinkers such as Deleuze, Brecht, Boal, etc. and built upon in order to draw out new and interesting derivative theories and practices. Overlapping with the previously discussed interest in non-western performance and ritual, it may be of interest to introduce concepts taken from non-western theatre practices (for instance Kabuki theatre, as briefly mentioned in

Puchner's discussion of site-centred performances). Further, Puchner's discussion in *The Drama of Ideas* regarding the history and practice of the Socrates play might provide an interesting and philosophically-grounded source of derivation.

An emphasis on games and play might lead to two interesting avenues of research. One of them is drawing from research which I originally embarked on in my undergraduate dissertation, examining the concept of the "roleplaying game", in which participants act out the parts of characters in a story whilst following the constraints of pre-written rules governing success and failure of actions. Of particular interest is the so-called "Live-action roleplay", or LARP, in which rather than being played whilst sat around a table as in the traditional game participants dress up in costumes and interact in the real world, often with imitation weapons and crude special effects. The similarity between LARP and re-enactment is undoubtedly clear, with the primary difference being that the former is based in fantasy and invented stories and characters whilst the latter carries a veneer of historical basis. The usage of such rituals in terms of identity and the explorations of themes on a more immediate and first-person basis than in a general observation could be a ripe source for research.

The second point of interest in terms of games and play is the internet, in particular the realm of "internet memes" – that is, the use of in-jokes and captioned graphics often used to communicate ideas and concepts. Many memes go through cycles of use and reuse in playfully edited manners, often in ways which reference each other or non-meme subjects, which are currently popular. As such they may be viewed as an image-based performance designed to understand or comment on the world, popular culture, current affairs, and so on.

### **Final Words**

The most central theme to this thesis has been that of the nature of performativity within the context of ritual performances: it is the performative, the causing of something to "happen", whether that be a change of status as in the marriage or initiation ritual, or a more general ongoing taken-for-granted such as in Butler's view of gender, that marks the performance as more than simply a series of arbitrary words and/or actions. In Chapter Four the concept of *First Philosophy*, understood as the concept that performance is that which is primal to the study of philosophical matters, was introduced. I suggested that before we begin the actual act of "doing philosophy", we



cause that doing to occur as part of a performance, within particular space and given particular contexts and meanings to our choice of words, format, particular ideas or sources privileged or snubbed, and so on. In this sense then, what is the performativity of philosophy? The answer would seem to be that there is perhaps some special construct of methods, specialist language, mediums, etc. which creates for the reader a sense that a particular work belongs to the constructed category that is “philosophy”.

What is the first philosophy of this thesis? More importantly, can such a question be consciously asked by the author of the thesis or is the wider context something which can only be examined from a more detached and objective standpoint than is perhaps possible – certainly at the time of writing, such detachment is more difficult than would be the case weeks or months later.

At the conclusion of a conference presentation, *Beyond the Preposition*, upon which a large section of Chapter Four was based, I asked the rhetorical question as to whether a presentation on performance being *first philosophy* was self-demonstrating. If the same rhetorical question were proposed towards this thesis as a whole then the answer may seem to be more clear-cut: for the most part this thesis has not strayed so far from the traditional boundaries and format to be considered to constitute a notably subversive performance. On the other hand, one might propose that the conscious decision not to break from such rules is itself an informed performance: whilst the confusing and poetic writings of Deleuze/Guattari, Nietzsche, etc. are certainly interesting and fine examples of philosophy as an overt performance, they are not examples of a PhD thesis. Is then the root performance of this work one of acknowledging and re-enacting a long-running academic ritual of assessed work?

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